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ACROSS AFRICA ON FOOT

By
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DEDICATED
TO THOSE WHO WAITED
TO OUR WOMENFOLK
WILSON'S AND MINE
THE REAL HEROINES OF THE VENTURE

PREFACE

WHEN, at the hour of eleven o'clock on the morning of December 21st, 1929, James Hunter Wilson, A.A.I.S., accountant, of Johannesburg, and myself, journalist, of Perth, Western Australia—both clad in weather-worn khaki, heavy field boots, and solar topees, strode across the Kasr el Nil Bridge, that spans the Nile at Cairo, and headed down the Shari Kubri Kasr-el-Nil, bound for the heart of the City, with an ebony-skinned native of Central Africa, round-eyed and amazed at the flying traffic, padding at our heels, a fresh chapter in the story of Cape to Cairo was closed. For the first time the journey, of 7,628 miles, had been done on foot.

On September 8, 1928, 15½ months before, I had set off on the long trek from Capetown with Edward Alexander Robert Cooke, an adventurous young man with a lively imagination, in whose unquiet brain the project of walking from Capetown to Cairo had had its genesis. Unfortunately that gentleman's enthusiasm did not carry him far beyond Johannesburg, 1,000 miles on our way. I tramped on alone to the Limpopo, where a month later I was joined by my good friend Wilson. Together we finished the job, securing another recruit in the person of the dusky Lubumbashi, or Umbashi, a stout-hearted young Chewemba from the swamp country between Lakes Meru and Tanganyika, in the following February. Umbashi, stout fellow, stuck with us until the end, and is to this day in Wilson's service in Johannesburg.

The walk was the outcome of no challenge or bet, nor was it entered upon for any other reason than that the idea appealed to us when it was presented to each of us in turn. Strangely enough, neither Wilson nor I had

any notion of making the walk at the time Cooke planned the venture. Wilson joined me when Cooke dropped out because he could not allow a pal to go footslogging over "Darkest Africa" alone.

I came into the walk in the following manner.

On July 11, 1928, the *City of Manila*, bound from Melbourne to South Africa, with Cooke on board, berthed at Fremantle. At the time I was City Roundsman for *The West Australian* newspaper. A brother Pressman interviewed Cooke, who told of his plan to tramp through Africa, carrying little beyond a pack and a rifle, and next morning I read in *The West Australian*—

"A 7,000-MILE TRAMP
TRANS-AFRICAN PROJECT
AUSTRALIAN WANTS PARTNER.

"A young Australian, Edward A. Cooke, who arrived in Fremantle yesterday on the liner *City of Manila*, intends to add another record to his already colourful career. As soon as he reaches Capetown he will make arrangements for an attempt to cross Africa on foot from Capetown to Cairo, and on the journey he will endeavour to lower the world's record for the 4,000, 5,000 and 6,000 miles tramps. He has been assured by the South African Government that, if he succeeds in his intention, he will be the first white man to cross the continent on foot.

"When interviewed yesterday, Cooke said that he would walk from Capetown to Rhodesia and thence through Tanganyika, Kenya and Uganda to the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan. He would follow the White Nile to its confluence with the Nile, and along the banks of the river he would walk to Cairo. To lower the record for 6,000 miles he would have to reach Cairo in under eight months and seven days.

"One thing only Cooke lacks, and that is a companion, and he is anxious to secure in Western Australia, a

man, preferably an ex-service man, who will share his fortunes. He has been guaranteed a companion on his arrival at Capetown, but he is anxious to have an Australian comrade. The *City of Manila* will remain at Fremantle until the week-end, and those anxious to share his adventures will be able to interview him on the vessel. . . ."

* * *

Cooke and I met, and, to put it shortly, I arranged to join up before the *City of Manila* sailed. I was to follow on another vessel some weeks later, and he was to await me in Capetown. The events that followed on that arrangement are set out in this narrative.

PERTH, W. A., *July*, 1930.

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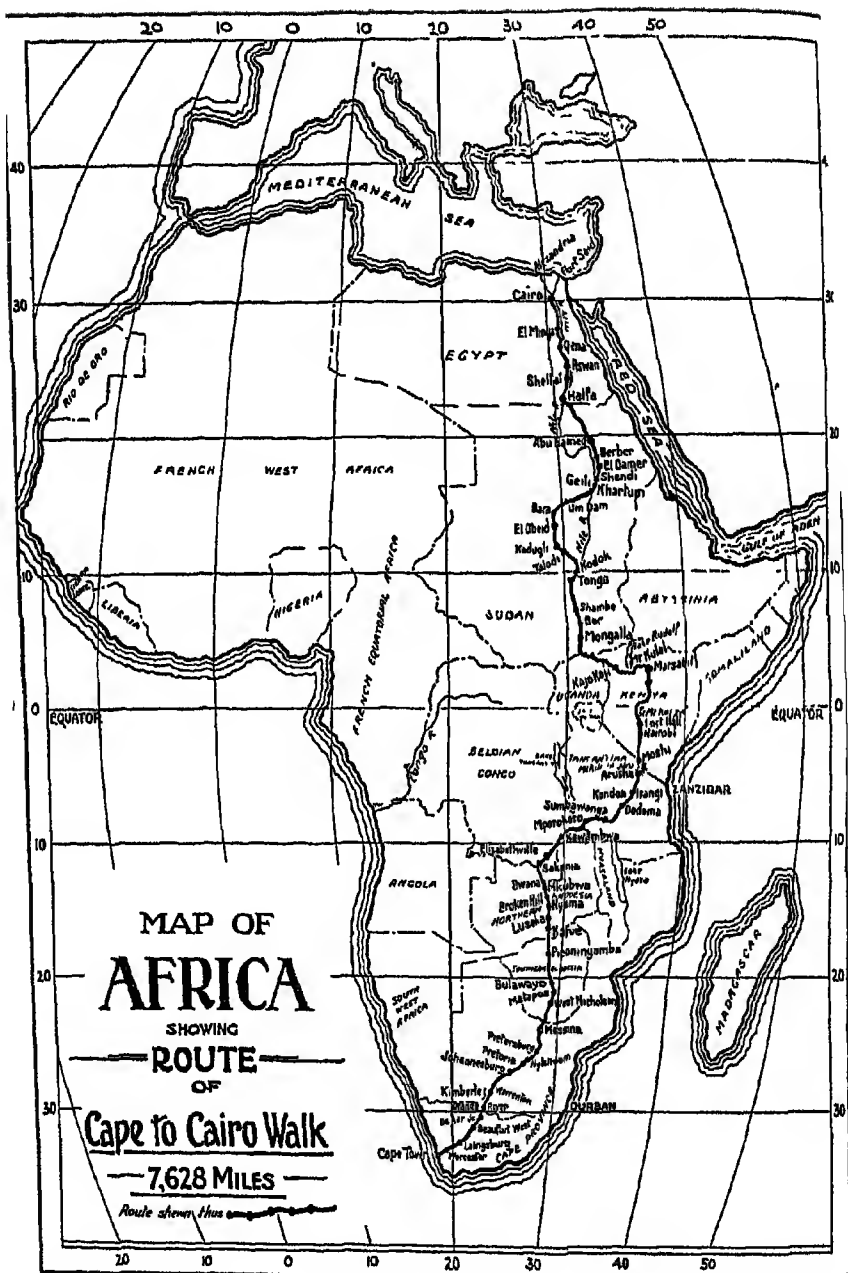
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The Memorial to Alan Wilson and his Men
S Rhodesia



Our first *Safari* • Leaving Inyati for the Bush



An old Matibele Induna and his Councillors Near the Shangani River



A Native Village near the Shangani

ACROSS AFRICA ON FOOT

CHAPTER I

THE GAME'S AFOOT

DEPARTURE—TUMULT—FIRST GLIMPSE OF AFRICA—DURBAN—
"COOKEY"

STANDING by the ship's rail in the darkness before a dawn, I strove to see through and beyond the murky blackness ahead. To keep a foothold on the wet and pitching deck in the face of the hurricane that spun the damp hair across my forehead, and sent the voluminous folds of my great-coat billowing above my shoulders, I had to hold hard to the wet salt-slime covered rail. Through the stays the high wind howled and shrieked. The ceaseless rush of bilge waters cascaded noisily into the heaving sea, now splashing, now gurgling, as the rising and falling waves closed or left free the exit channels. As we chugged through the dark, mountainous seas rushed past us, white-crested waves surged in out of the blackness beyond the lighted track the ship was making, rose up until they threatened to engulf us, sank far below our plimsoll line, and recoiled, baffled, into the blackness again. Salt spray whipped across the decks. Far out in the darkness another vessel, worsted in its conflict with the elements, was, we were told, rapping out its distress signals.

It was not the best of times to be on deck, but Africa lay very close ahead at that hour and I wanted to be there to see its outline emerge from the gloom. The sea, the air, the very heavens were in tumult, and the

Berserk spirit had entered my blood. There could be no sleep for me until I had glimpsed the land against which we were very soon to put our powers of endurance.

At last! Lights showed up ahead, mere pin points at first, that came and went. Then, as we drew nearer, the murk became agleam with them. Dawn was coming, and the shadowy bulk of a massive headland could be made out in the half-light, its gloomy face glowing in places with myriads of winking lights. Coming on that sight out of the storm and dark, after weeks out of sight of land, I felt strangely stirred. Africa was a reality at last—was very near at hand. The task ahead began to assume definite proportions.

Sea and shore grew lighter; one by one the lights faded. The wintry dawn-sky flushed blood-red above the bluff, and the rugged line of Africa's southern cape was more clearly revealed. There was a grandeur in the spectacle that gave me to feel that the searcher after romantic adventure in the continent's heart would not be disappointed.

Durban had seen Cooke, and entertained him well, so I learned on landing. He had passed on to Capetown, where he was proceeding with the preparations for the trek. So much the newspapers told me. The information was heartening, for I had harboured certain misgivings since I had received no reply to a cable I had sent him the day before I left Fremantle.

We stayed in Durban long enough to allow me to receive an impression that will linger forever of as delightful a town as one could happen upon.

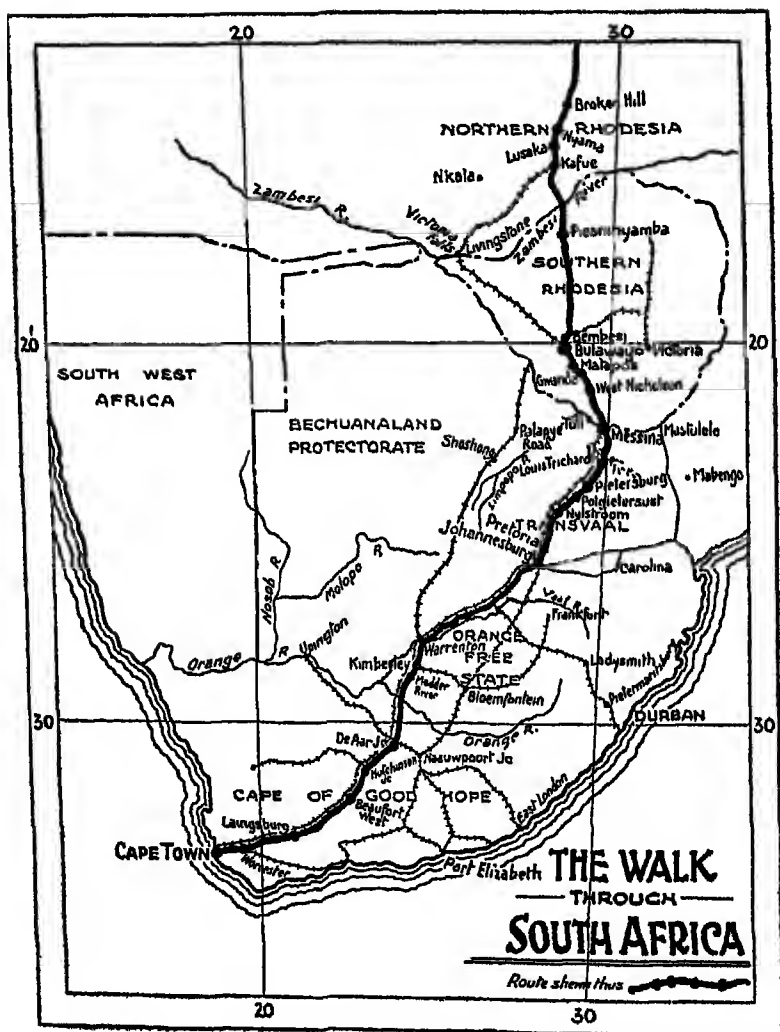
Steaming round the stormy Cape of Good Hope, we left the following albatross behind when Table Mountain showed up dimly through the rain mists, and a few hours later were berthing.

Cooke was there to greet me, resplendent in the uniform of an officer of the Cape Province militia. From the wharfside he shouted an inquiry concerning the condition of my feet. The greeting, if unconven-

tional, was pertinent. He had completed arrangements, and our long tramp was timed to start at 11 a.m. on the morrow. It was short notice for me, but I deemed it wise to fall in with the plan. I would feel surer of my irresponsible companion once we were on the move. His appearance in Army uniform was something I had not reckoned upon, and I sensed that there was no guessing what he might be doing next.

On the wharf we embraced like brothers, and as we were attending to the Customs formalities he explained the uniform by saying that Capetown had treated him royally and had, among other things, given him an honorary commission in the forces on the strength of his association with the Royal Australian Air Force. He had, too, become an honorary member of the War Star Club, and the excellent fellows of that South African ex-soldiers' organisation had extended their hospitality to him without reserve. That very day he had been given an audience by General Smuts, and had later received news of his appointment as a Trooper in the famous Legion of Frontiersmen. The Press had given his previous walking exploits the widest publicity, the police had arranged our itinerary as far as Johannesburg, and officers along our route had been advised to assist us in any way possible. I was not long in Capetown before I learned that its citizens had taken "Cookey" to their hearts. He was the hero of the hour. All those facts I heard and noted, and was agreeably surprised. The knowledge that my partner in the task ahead had more than favourably impressed the people of Capetown relieved my mind considerably. I had harboured a suspicion that he was perhaps not only venturesome but something of an adventurer. Now most of my doubts were set at rest. Everything was in order, we were both ready to tackle the difficult job before us, and all save the weather was propitious for the start on the morrow. My preparations for the fifteen months' journey ahead consisted of sorting my kit, packing my rifle, ammunition and a few odds and

ends, to be forwarded by rail to Johannesburg, labelling suit cases for the return to Australia of my civilian clothing—my last links with a normal existence—and attending to a volume of correspondence. My monetary wealth reposed in a single wallet, and was to go with me.



THE FIRST STAGE

CHAPTER II

ACROSS CAPE COLONY

START IN THE RAIN—FIRST DAY ON THE ROAD—THROUGH THE
HEX RIVER MOUNTAINS—THE WANDERING PROFESSOR—FOOTSORE
—ACROSS THE KAROO—MIXED BLOODS—SOUVENIRS OF THE BOER
WAR—THE DIAMOND CITY—JOHANNESBURG

AT 10.30 a.m. on September 8, 1928, Cooke and I met at the *Argus* office to begin our attempt on the hitherto unachieved feat of walking from one end of the African continent to the other. We felt confident that before the next year ended a fresh chapter in the story of the Cape to Cairo route would be written.

We were dressed in khaki shirts and breeches, stout field boots and sun helmets. Each carried a water bottle and a waterproof cloak. In the knapsacks strapped to our backs we had each a change of clothing, a spare pair of boots, an automatic pistol, skinning knives, one blanket, a compass and a pair of field glasses.

A large crowd gathered to bid us God-speed. There were speeches. Cooke thanked the people of Capetown for their many kindnesses and concluded his peroration by saying, "I have a feeling that I shall settle finally somewhere in Africa". I fancied from the manner in which some of the citizens regarded us, that the more morbid-minded of them had the same feeling concerning both of us.

Cheers were given, cameras clicked and we started, members of the War Star Club doing us the honour of marching with us through the streets to the outskirts of the city. Drizzling rain was falling at the start, and

before we had covered a mile the heavens seemed to burst, and rain pelted down on us, continuing for the next hour. The portents were not favourable, but with the open road before us we cared not for trifles and swung along joyously. Cooke had taken advantage of his three weeks' stay in Capetown to break in his boots for the road, but mine were new, and at the end of five miles I had developed the father of all blisters. We suffered from scores of them later, but I still have poignant memories of that first one. Progress on the first day was slow. Hospitable Dutch and English residents came out of their houses and forced us to pause for a flask of tea or a sandwich; well wishers from the city came after us in motor cars, bringing liquid refreshment with them. Captain McWade, in command of the Legion of Frontiersmen on the Rand, intercepted us and handed Cooke his credentials as a Trooper in the Legion; a charming equestrienne kept us company for many a pleasant mile. At the end of twenty miles Mr. W. S. Gordon and his wife, of Langeburg Farm, Durbanville, motored to meet us, and insisted on our spending the night under their roof. As dusk and further rain were approaching, and our raw and blistered feet were acutely painful, we accepted the invitation with feelings of devout relief, and thankful indeed we were when the last yards to their pretty farm homestead were covered, and we were able to slip our heavy packs from our aching shoulders and slide into easy chairs. Never was the benison of warm water so much appreciated by either of us before as it was when we wallowed in the depths of our first bath on the Cape to Cairo road. Aches vanished, and though nothing could quite relieve the burning of our tortured feet, sodium permanganate solution relieved the pain considerably, and after supper we sank gratefully into most comfortable beds, to sleep the sleep of the utterly exhausted.

From our beds next morning we surveyed our muddy field boots and winced in anticipation. It required an

effort of will to crawl out in the chill morning air and we faced the ordeal of pulling on those heavy, stiff instruments of torture, much in the manner of martyrs waiting with bated breath for the first of the flames to lick their bodies.

Ready at length, we took leave of our kindly hosts, and trudged through the mud and slush, going slowly, very slowly, at first—to Mulder's Vlei, where we lunched on bread and dripping at a Dutch farm-house.

Through the charming, typically Dutch township of Paarl, with its single seven-miles long street, running between the Drakenstein and Paarl mountains, we passed, and clapped on the pace to reach Wellington by nightfall. Twenty-eight miles we covered that day and arrived at the Masonic Hotel almost crippled. Footsore and aching in every muscle, we could scarcely climb the stairs to our rooms.

From Wellington the Great North road rises 2,000 feet in nine miles through the beautiful scenery of Bain's Kloof. The next day was warm and our packs were heavy, so climbing was an arduous task. We plodded on without halting, however, and our reward was an excellent lunch at the hotel at the summit, and a feast of glorious scenery, viewed later from a road that wound down-hill all the way. Above us towered masses of solid rock, that went up sheer for thousands of feet and terminated among the clouds in a jumble of snow-clad peaks. Through a rocky valley 600 feet below us, the Wit River foamed and splashed in a maddened rush to lower levels. A hundred cataracts gushed from crevices below the line of the snows, and filtered in fairy showers down the smooth faces of the granite walls by which we passed.

Here and there miniature torrents spouted from clefts in the mighty cliffs of rock, passed through culverts beneath the road, and went splashing down to the river in the valley. It was a glorious walk, and so that we might enjoy it more fully we removed our torturing boots, donned sand-shoes from our packs, and when a

motor car overtook us we handed our packs and boots to the driver, asking him to drop them lower down the road. We tramped along in comfort and sheer content after that.

Presently around a bend in the road came a team of pack donkeys being urged up the steep slope by a shouting native. In their wake strode a veritable giant of a man, clad in stout sandals, shorts and a shirt that left his great brown chest exposed to the keen mountain air. We halted and exchanged greetings. He introduced himself as Professor G. Seubring, F.R.G.S., a Hollander, and a member of the Heidelberg University. Some years before he had started a wandering trip in Northern Africa, and had been roaming the continent ever since, studying its geology and its inhabitants. He was heading for Capetown—and the end of his trip. When we told him we were engaged on a walking trip to Cairo, he wished us well, and gave us some account of the parts he had visited. He informed us, among other things, that about 95% of the Abantu (black people) of Central Africa were sufferers from venereal diseases. On what he based his figure I do not know. I think it is an over-estimate. We learned later that the disease was very prevalent, but as I see it, if the sorry percentage had reached such a figure, it could not remain at it for very long. The native ways of living would rapidly bring it up to 100%. *Reductio ad absurdum!*

Taking leave of the Professor we resumed our downhill march, jolting in the exercise of walking despite our blistered feet. It was an enormous relief to be rid for a while of those torturing field boots. For all that, we knew the value of them. We could not dispense with stout footwear, because of the nature of our journey. They would be all right when our feet hardened. Realising that, our hearts sank when we discovered that we had lost them and our packs too. The motorist who took them on for us had agreed to leave them by the roadside, a certain distance ahead, and had explained just how he would secrete them so

we would have no difficulty in locating them. We recognised the bridge by which he had said he would leave them, but though we searched long we could not locate them. Perhaps there was a similar bridge ahead—we would search there. There were half a dozen similar bridges. We searched around them all but in vain. It was growing dusk and there were no habitations in sight. The road was still a mere ledge winding around through the mountains, most of the way clinging precariously to a cliff face between soaring snow-streaked heights and the foaming river in the gorge beneath. It looked as if we might have to spend the night in the raw mountain air—and our blankets were in our missing packs. Great was our relief, therefore, when at the end of a few more miles the road ran down into a valley and we saw a farm-house half-hidden in a pleasant grove.

The old Boer who lived there welcomed us cordially enough. At first he refused to admit that he understood English, and replied to all our remarks in Afrikaans; racial prejudice is not quite dead in South Africa yet. When we had exhausted our knowledge of his tongue with "Gwia More, Oom! Ons es op pad no Cairo" (our version of "Good day, Uncle! We are on the road for Cairo") it appeared as if conversation would flag, but on satisfying himself that we would not reply in Afrikaans because we could not, he unbent and invited us, in English, to stay the night. Cooke and I had heard many alleged authentic stories during the brief time we had been in the country relating to the hospitable customs of the Dutch, and we wondered if it were a fact that we would be invited to share one large bed with the family when the time came for us to turn in.

We ate supper with the good Dutchman, his buxom wife, comely daughter and sturdy sons, gathered around a long heavily-made table in a plain but cosy room, ceiled with planks of that notchy yellow wood used for every ceiling in South Africa, I fully believe. They

were friendly folk and over the "biltong" (dried meat) rusks, and coffee we discussed politics—of both the Dutch and English brands—the question of corporal punishment of natives (our host had only one opinion about that; Dutchmen do not spare the sjambok), and a variety of other topics.

We were up with the first streaks of daylight. The farmer had a motor car and had offered to motor us back along the road so that we might retrieve our boots and packs.

After some searching we found them intact, and returned to the farm for breakfast.

The road to Worcester skirts a noble mountain range for most of the way. Heavy snow-drifts glinting in the bright sunshine appeared alluringly cold and refreshing to us as we marched, for down on the veldt all was parched and dry. A sun-baked, stony road played havoc with our aching, blistered feet, the straps of our burdensome packs cut cruelly into our shoulders, rubbed raw in several spots by that time, and we suffered from prodigious thirsts, for not a stream did we pass. As the day advanced the sun grew hotter, the road surface became more uneven, and the pain of our feet became steadily worse, until we could scarcely urge them onwards. Ruefully we surveyed the seemingly unending road ahead, trudged on a few more miles, and then dropped as one man into the dust. Pulling off our boots gingerly we gazed long and tenderly at our tortured feet. Cooke's were a gruesome sight. Blood was oozing from half a dozen raw patches, and each of us could count a dozen throbbing blisters, some as large as half-crowns. In the absence of any other implements, we pricked the accessible ones with the points of our fleshing knives, padded the tenderest spots with cotton wool, replaced the hateful boots, and limped on. Starting after such a halt was ever an agonising process in those days. Once we got warmed up it wasn't so bad. Our feet would suffer excruciating agony each time they clumped against the unsympathetic earth, until, at length, the

pain becoming unendurable, they would faint—become unconscious—and we would be walking on, on dead parts of ourselves. The action of walking would become mechanical, and as long as the kinæsthetic areas of our brains kept functioning we could keep on moving, numbed and almost unconscious ourselves, but getting there.

Physiologists may not agree that that account of our physical processes at such times is in any way accurate, but it gives some idea of what walking felt like when we were nearly "all in". We hated stopping, because starting again was such an ordeal. It might have been humorous to watch us "getting under way" again, and trying to disguise our condition from the conversationally-inclined well-wishers who halted us on the road, but our inward groans at such moments were awful.

That day Cooke found walking a harder task than ever, and when he examined his foot late in the afternoon he found that it showed every sign of being poisoned. Our pace was slowed from the $4\frac{1}{2}$ miles an hour we had kept up from Capetown to a mere crawl, and darkness had set in before we reached the pretty little township of Orchards. In pouring rain we trudged to the home of the postmaster, Du Toit, and his wife, where we were, by invitation, to stop the night. Ted's foot was worse next morning, and we were compelled to halt for a day. Trouble had developed thus early in the journey. The tiny daughter of the household was vastly entertained by the presence of two strange beings who could not speak Afrikaans, but she prattled on merrily in that strange jargon, laughed delightedly at our attempt to imitate its strangling gutturals, and became very friendly indeed. The Du Toits, like all Dutch South Africans, were kindly folk. I remember how delighted they were, when, listening-in on their wireless to the broadcasting from Capetown, on the night of our arrival, we all heard the announcer wishing the two walkers, "now resting beneath the orchard

boughs", Good-bye and Good Hope—the traditional Cape farewell.

Ted's foot being somewhat better by the morning of the second day after our arrival there, we walked 33 miles through the Hex River mountains to Touws River. We completed our first week on the road footsore and still a little stiff in body and limb, but with enthusiasm for the miles ahead still running high.

At Touws River we left the mountains of the Cape behind and our trek across the parched, desolate, pitiful Karoo commenced.

The days that followed were wearying ones of hard tramping followed by uneventful nights, when, as often as not, we flung ourselves down in our clothes in the dry Karoo dust and slept under the glorious, clear-shining stars. It is a romantic, yet sorrowful land, that Karoo. Being then in the grip of a drought that had persisted for three years, its streams had dried up, its fodder plants had withered, and its very hills—bleak, bare kopjes strung in endless chains across the brown, dry plains—seemed dead. Sheep had perished by the thousands, and many a poor "back veldt" farmer we passed with his family, and scanty goods and chattels, piled into creaking bullock waggons, driving his sadly diminished flocks before him, in search of places farther afield where pastures, perhaps, were green.

Matjesfontein, where we stayed at the historic Milner Hotel, the famous rendezvous of the British General Staff during the Boer War, Laingsburg, Prince Albert Road, Fraserburg Road and Beaufort West were left behind, and 340 miles of the 1,000 miles to Johannesburg were covered. From Prince Albert Road to Beaufort West is 74 miles and we covered it in 23 hours, with but one halt of two hours for sleep. It was our best effort thus far. We arrived at Beaufort West, the main town of the Karoo, dirty, hungry and tired, with four days' growth of beard on our faces, but as happy as sandboys. Mr. Morris Garb made us his guests at the Royal Hotel, and the Police Commandant of the Beau-

fort West Police District (Capt. Thomas) a Boer War veteran, adopted us and entertained us royally for the week-end we spent in that most picturesque of all Karoo townships.

The weather changed suddenly the night before we left Beaufort West, and it was bitterly cold when we started at daybreak. A biting wind blew at our backs all day, chilling us to the bone. Hail fell, and our hands and other exposed parts of our bodies turned blue with cold, hurry as we would in an endeavour to restore the circulation. At the end of 22 miles we reached Kruge's farm at Rhcnosterkop and were invited to stop for lunch. During the progress of the meal, a young, soldierly-looking police-sergeant, belted and spurred, and clad in the military uniform worn by all Cape Colony police, arrived at the farm. He had come from Nelspoort, a small Karoo police post that lay along our route. He was an interesting personality and had many tales to tell concerning his experiences in dealing with crime among the natives.

The young sergeant—he was little more than a youth—showed a lively interest in our venture and he decided to walk with us as far as his police post. We had already covered 22 miles that day and were a trifle footsore, but when our companion set a clinking 5-mile-an-hour gait we could not—would not—sacrifice our prestige. Once only did we halt during those 12 arduous miles to Nelspoort, and Cooke and I were scarcely able to disguise the fact we were almost crippled when the “kantoor” eventually came in sight. To our secret chagrin our friend hardly appeared to be affected by the furious pace that had been maintained over a bad road. We dined with him and his colleagues at the “kantoor”, and when, after supper, we felt like crawling to our beds and throwing ourselves on them, he horrified us by requesting us to join him at a game of billiards. I, for one, would have been unable to hobble around the table. We excused ourselves, stalked from the company with as sprightly an

air as we could simulate on lacerated feet and aching limbs, but once in the privacy of our room we crawled to our beds and fell asleep, almost as soon as our boots were off.

When we rose next morning there was no sign of the sergeant. At breakfast we were told that he intended remaining in bed until noon—he was “a little stiff”.

We restrained our chortles until we were clear of the “kantoor.”

That night we slept between cool sheets at Magee's farm at Krom River and awoke refreshed for the long tramp over the next dry dusty stage to Hutchinson. Before leaving, Mrs. Magee, a motherly soul, insisted on our taking with us a bottle of milk. Cooke, whose feet were still troubling him, was of the opinion that an occasional rub with methylated spirits would ease them, and the good lady also provided us with a bottle of that doubtful salve.

So we took to the open Károo once more, each of us carrying a bottle in one hand, our heavy packs on our shoulders, and our dusty clothes looking, by that time, somewhat dilapidated and travel-stained—a queer looking pair of vagabonds. Cooke had become possessed of a mouth-organ at Nelspoort, and during the early stages of that day he provided some comic relief by hobbling along in the jaunty style of an ancient treading the measures of a barn-dance, to the horrible strains he drew from the wheezy instrument. Occasionally such foolishness was helpful in rousing failing spirits. By mid-afternoon we were feeling more than usually peckish, as we had eaten nothing since early morning. Spying a native kraal in the distance, we headed towards it in the hope of being able to purchase a chicken and some eggs.

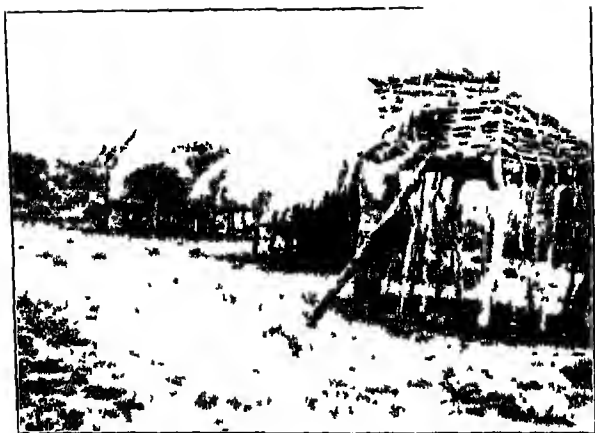
There were no European houses within miles, and our surprise therefore was great when, on drawing near the rude habitation, we saw a grimy but pretty little blue-eyed, flaxen-haired child playing on an ash-heap, and crowing delightedly as she poured handfuls



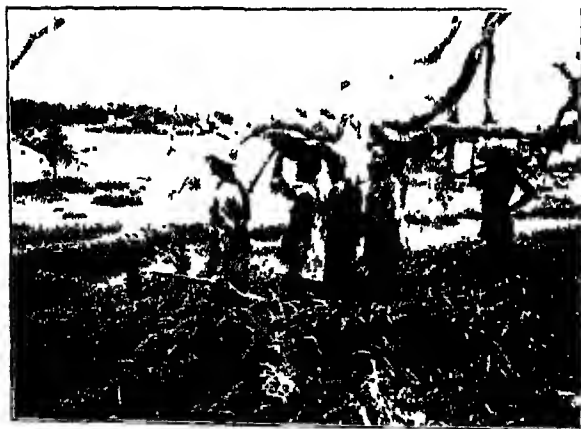
A Native Village on the Gwelo River



Natives Sounding the Gwelo after the Flood which delayed
us Two Days



A Fowl Roost out of reach of "Skelmis": between the
Kana and Lutope Rivers.



Christmas Morning, 1928: On the Zambezi.

of the ash over her head. A buxom black woman was busily engaged over some pots on a fire in the open, and a couple of black piccanins and two little half-castes ran to her and regarded us fearfully as we approached. We made known our wants, and as the woman was preparing the chicken for us we questioned her about the white child. She proudly claimed it as her own. She herself, she told us, was a native of Martinique and had French blood in her veins. She had had several husbands—of a temporary order—and had had children to an African native and to a Cape coloured “boy”. The blue-eyed mite was the daughter of her present husband, a man with an Irish father and a native mother. There was something tragic about that innocent prattling little French-Irish-Negro-Abantu quarter-caste playing on her ash-heap in such squalid surroundings. We wondered what would become of her if she were to be transplanted from that South African kraal and given an education in a good English home. Fortunately, with her pretty face and her terribly mixed inheritance, no such fate as would surely render her life a hell is in store for her. She will eventually mate with her kind, and her life will be most likely not a whit different from the lives of the other tens of thousands of coloured folk in South Africa. Yet no one can contemplate such an example of the tragedy which follows the mixings of blood without finding a fund for much gloomy thought. Men of every race, however, will always continue to commit these sins against Nature and children will continue to be born without birthrights and denied all hopes of ever sharing the advantages that the possession of European blood in their veins should bestow upon them, while yet they know the black-men of the kraals are not their kind. It is an unhappy state of affairs, but every country where the races mingle shares the same problem.

We took our well-roasted chicken and a dozen hard-boiled eggs down to the sandy bed of a dry water-

course. Stretching out luxuriously under the warm sun, we prepared for the most pleasant function we knew of in those days—attending to our abnormally healthy appetites. Tearing the legs from the bird, we fell silent and gave ourselves over to the full enjoyment of the repast.

It was a long dreary tramp we had that day, and when the stars came out—myriads of gleaming stars glowing brightly in the purple heavens—we were still far from Hutchinson. A warm breeze came to us across the veldt, carrying the clean scents of dried shrubs and parched earth. Jackals yapped in the neighbouring kopjes, but all else was silent in that lonely land. Steadily we tramped on, heavy-eyed for want of sleep, but soothed by a magic quality of the wonderful night. There was something about those starry nights out on the South African veldt that had the power of casting a spell over the senses, and an indefinable quality of witchery that made one forget tired bodies and aching limbs and allowed one to succumb to the mystic loveliness of a languorous upland night. We tramped—always in silence—through many of them. That night it was close upon midnight before we reached the little hotel at Hutchinson, arriving hungry, tired and indescribably filthy, but ready for the road again when we had slept a little.

On the road to Brakfontein next day we were reminded that the unfrequented veldt which we were then crossing had been in the line of the advance of the British troops on Kimberley, and that the silent kopjes on either hand had once given back the echoes of shell and rifle fire. Behind a low outcrop of brown rock we saw where Boers or Britons had held a position during some now forgotten fight. Spent mauser shell-cases littered the veldt behind the rocks in hundreds, pieces of barbed wire lay about; rusted camp ovens riddled and torn with bullets, pieces of rotted harness; trace-chains; the remnant of a water-bottle; empty tins and other odds and ends, showed where men had fought

and died. Farther off little mounds, marked by rotting crosses, from which most of the writing had been long since obliterated, told where Britons who had seen the morning of that day 30 years before were left to rest at its close. There is nothing that produces quite the same feeling of melancholy as does a lonely war-grave, suddenly come upon in a lonely land, and the graves of English dead are scattered far and wide across the parched Karoo. We paid our silent tributes and passed on, by block-house and earthwork, through dusty De Aar and Houtkraal, over the Orange River bridge, to Belmont, Enslin and Honey Nest Kloof, and on to Modder River.

Approaching the scene of that historic fight of the Boer War we noticed a change in the landscape. The country was still flat but was fresher and greener in appearance, and the unbroken line of bare, dead-looking kopjes with which we had been familiar since starting on our journey across the Karoo had been left behind. Our line of march skirted the boundary of the Orange Free State and the Cape Province, and ploughed farmlands were visible on either hand.

About dusk on the last day of September we came across a small military cemetery nestling between the railway embankment and a belt of trees bordering the river. There we read the names of about a score of men killed in the fight at Modder River on November 28th, 1899.

In the large cemetery at Modder River we noticed among the graves, where the dead of both armies rest side by side, the names of many Scandinavians. On inquiry the following incident was related.

Aiding the Boers in the Magersfontein fight was a band of Scandinavian soldiers of fortune. During the advance of the British on that fateful morning, they held their fire, with the object of allowing the troops who were approaching the kopje, across ground that they were set to watch, to come right up to their entrenchments, on the left of the kopje itself. Their

object was to make sure that none of the enemy escaped in the darkness. On came the British, and to their surprise they were allowed to pass the wire, that, on other parts of the front was proving a death trap to their comrades, in comparative safety. They dashed around the kopje, and then the Scandinavians opened fire. They had miscalculated the calibre of their foes. On scrambled the Highlanders, fighting mad at the loss of their comrades, and within half-an-hour not one of those Scandinavian strategists was left alive, though they fought gallantly to retrieve their error.

Our mentor while we were at Modder River was Sergeant O'Reilly, of the South African Police, son of Trader O'Reilly, who shared with the Dutch farmer, Schalk van Niekerk, the discovery of the famous O'Reilly diamond, the first found in South Africa. In his company we visited the farm of one Robert Rostoll, and inspected a very interesting relic of the Modder River fight. Nestling in a poplar grove on the farm is a bar-room, which has been left exactly as it survived the fire of the opposing forces during the fight. The roof shows where shot peppered it, the brick walls are chipped in a score of places and the interior is in great disorder. Stocks of cigarettes in glass cases behind the counter have been left as they were when a hasty retreat from the place became necessary. A sword, half out of its scabbard, lies on the floor, and in the billiard parlour other signs tell a mute story of resting soldiers hurriedly called to fight. Portions of an officer's equipment lie scattered across the floor, a billiard cue rests in the thick dust now coating the green baize top of the billiard table, and another rests on a seat. One corner of the table is torn off, the leg being splintered, a gaping rent in the roof, roughly patched to keep out the rain, showing where the shell tore through.

Messrs. Simpson and W. E. Martin, of the *Diamond Fields Advertiser*, the Kimberley morning newspaper, came out along the road to welcome us to the Diamond City, and we had our first view of the town from the

summit of the Siege memorial to which they conducted us. An interesting adjunct to that towering memorial of the stirring days of 1899-1900, when for 122 days the starving populace was shut up within the city by the Boer commandoes, under General Ferreira, is "Long Cecil", a 4.1 breech-loading gun that played a prominent part in keeping off the invaders. It was a product of the constructive genius of Mr. M. G. Labram, an American citizen, who was Chief Engineer for De Beers Co., who manufactured it almost unaided within the town after the siege had commenced. It had an efficient range of 8,000 yards and was heavier than any enemy gun brought into action against the town. Unfortunately its maker was killed by a stray Boer shell while he was in his hotel six days before French got through with the relief force.

Kimberley's warm-hearted people evinced a particularly keen interest in our adventure and they welcomed us right royally. During our stay of one and a half days we were the guests of the *Diamond Fields Advertiser* management, and everything was done to render our visit memorable. We were taken to inspect the town's chief show place, the Big Hole—an enormous cavity in the ground within a hundred yards of the heart of the town, from which diamonds worth a fabulous sum have been won. Today, in keeping with the policy of strictly regulating the country's output of diamonds, in order to keep up values, the cavernous hole in the clay is not being worked, and stout barbed-wire fences carrying a powerful charge of electricity guard the treasure from the incursions of intruders. In the offices of the mighty De Beers Corporation nearby, nearly a million pounds worth of uncut gems were housed, and we enjoyed there the experience of allowing heaps of magnificent stones to trickle through our hands. Some of them were as large as pigeons' eggs, and, though they were uncut specimens, the lustrous beauty of them, enhanced in our eyes, perhaps, because we knew their value represented a King's

ransom, was something to marvel at. We saw, too, a replica of the famous Cullinan diamond, which, before cutting, weighed $1\frac{3}{4}$ lb. and was worth about £1,000,000! Contrary to any expectations we might have harboured, no souvenirs were presented before we left.

It was with something of regret that we said goodbye to Kimberley and took the track to Windsorton Road, via Dronfield. For the first few miles that day we scanned the diamond-bearing country over which we passed for Cullinans and Koh-i-Noors, but the heat and dust drove pleasant visions from our minds and we concentrated on the task of covering the 27 miles to our day's goal. We searched the earth pretty thoroughly for signs of mineral wealth between Capetown and Cairo, and my baggage was heavily weighted with "samples" at different times—but it was always dross.

Days—and often nights—of hard tramping took us on past Warrenton and across the Vaal River, by way of Fourteen Streams, into the Transvaal. We passed sleepy mining dorps, where thirsty young Afrikanders in wide-brimmed sombreros oft-times bade us pause and wash the dust from our throats at some tumble down hotel bar; Bloemhof, Maquassi and Klerksdorp were left behind, and, on October 8th, we reached the once-important Transvaal township of Potchefstroom, with Johannesburg, the end of the first 1,000 miles stage a little over two days' journey ahead. To us that first month on the road had served as a test of our physical fitness for the gruelling task to be accomplished. Apart from all other considerations, such as one's mental qualifications for undertaking a journey such as we had planned, and keeping resolutely to the original purpose, failure must be certain if one is physically incapable of enduring long marches under all manner of adverse conditions. Carrying on when meal-times exceed by far the number of meals; going thirsty through long, hot days; sleeping in the cold and wet, and enduring the long drawn-out torture of marching on sore and blistered feet, are but a few of the physical

trials with which one must be able to contend. Determination can do much—more perhaps than any other single quality—but even that is futile if the flesh be weak.

At the close of the first month we found ourselves in excellent physical condition. Our muscles had hardened, we were capable of tramping thirty miles a day—and going hungry and thirsty in the course of it—without feeling unduly fatigued at its close, and, greatest joy of all, our feet were fit for almost any strain put upon them. We both felt confident concerning the remainder of the journey.

From Potchefstroom we tramped on through the day and following night, making the briefest of halts for refreshment at Boskop and Frederikstad, and arrived at Randfontein in the early hours of the morning. Leaving our hotel lodgings a few hours later we noticed the atmosphere ahead was charged with dense clouds of fine grey dust. Through the haze we made out the outlines of a huge mine dump. The first of the Rand's 60 miles of gold mines was in view. Through the heat and dust we marched, the length of a stifling day, loitering awhile at Krugersdorp for a much-needed bath and brush-up and slept that night at the Richmond Hotel, near Florida, on the outskirts of Johannesburg.

Anticipation of a respite from our labours and the enjoyment of the amenities of a brief sojourn in a centre of bustling civilization kept us long awake discussing the pleasant prospect. The successful accomplishment of the first task we had set ourselves—covering the initial 1,000 miles of our journey in 33 days—left us jubilant.

A reporter from *The Johannesburg Star* came out along the road to meet us when we tramped in next morning and escorted us to the post office, where newspaper representatives and citizens gave us a hearty welcome. Cooke had a mania for records, and nothing would satisfy him until he had been officially "checked

in " at a point five miles beyond the post office, where, according to his reckoning, the 1,000-mile mark from the *Cape Argus* office in Capetown, was located. I accompanied him in a motor car. I knew what the newspaper reporters did not—that Cooke had met with further trouble with his feet in the course of the previous few days—and that the last five miles he covered was an excruciatingly agonising task. Once he had to stop on the Pretoria bridge to adjust the bandages on his raw and bleeding foot, yet he managed to complete the additional five miles in 55 minutes. He would never confess to any disability and next morning the papers published a picture of a cheerful young man " removing a stone from his boot " during the closing stage of a record breaking walk! Unhappily for that record, Wilson, on his return to Capetown from Cairo, at the conclusion of our trek in company across the continent, walked home to Johannesburg in order to complete the whole distance on foot, and did the 1,000 miles in 26 days!

CHAPTER III

WE PART COMPANY

"THE RIDGE OF WHITE WATERS"—GOLD-PAVED STREETS—COOKI
DROPS OUT—THROUGH THE BUSH-VELDT ALONE

OUR FIRST few days in the Golden City left us little leisure for discussing our plans for the next stage. Johannesburg is lavish in its hospitality, and the interest in us displayed by the management of *The Johannesburg Star* resulted in a round of pleasures that occupied the whole of our time.

Through the courtesy of the *Star* newspaper and the management of the Government Arcas Mine we were able to inspect that mine, traverse the labyrinthic galleries below the surface and watch natives chipping the grey drab reef that, for all one can see, is less than useless rubble. Then to the surface to see the smelting. Huge ingots of pure gold fresh from the moulds, we saw. Wicked, gleaming gold, the lure that has called men to all corners of the earth, urging them to battle with Nature in her grimdest moods, calling them to wander far and penetrate her most inaccessible fastnesses, for she always hides her yellow treasure well. Gold!—dull, shining gold in huge lumps—£11,000 in each! Seven of them that grey-black rock yields up as we watch. It is a fascinating sight.

Johannesburg excels London in this, that its streets are paved with gold—actually! It is no legend. Ore that it does not pay to treat, but yet contains real gold, is used by the municipality for metalling the streets of Johannesburg. That is fitting—golden streets for a city of gold.

One of my first acts after reaching the city was to travel out to the suburb of Kensington and renew the acquaintance of an old friend of my school and University days in Perth. That visit, though we did not realise it at the time, was destined to have a considerable bearing on the Cape to Cairo walk. Miss Lillian Wilson and her charming mother and sister decided that day that it was neither meet nor fitting, that a wandering Australian should be abroad in a big continent without a watchful eye upon him, and forthwith adopted me into the family, which pleased me well. I was introduced to the son of the house, James Hunter Wilson, A.A.I.S., practising Accountant. We shook hands. I have shaken hands with Wilson on five occasions. They were all somewhat momentous ones in our young lives. That was the first. The second was when we met at Pietersburg in the Northern Transvaal, when I was trekking alone; the third was when he stepped off the train at Messina, on the border of Rhodesia and the Transvaal, to join up with me; the next was when we tramped into Cairo over a year later; the final occasion was when we parted at Port Said as my boat was leaving for Australia.

The morning following my meeting with Wilson I received an unpleasant shock. A gentleman from the *Star* newspaper called at our hotel and asked to see Cooke. That worthy was out and the newspaper man asked me if Cooke was, to my knowledge, a lieutenant in the Royal Australian Air Force. That I couldn't vouch for. I knew Cooke had been a member of the Air Force in Victoria and had served at the Point Cook aerodrome. I had read a cutting from the *Melbourne Herald* newspaper relating how Aircraftsman Edward A. Cooke, in company with several other Aircraftsmen from Point Cook had come to the rescue of a civilian attacked by thugs in a Melbourne street, and Cooke had related scores of incidents connected with his association with the Air Force, during our trip up from the Cape. Whether he has risen to the

rank of Flight Lieutenant, I was unable to say. I gathered that his use of the title dated from his appointment as an honorary lieutenant in the Cape militia. In justice to Cooke it must be said that he never made use of the title Flight Lieutenant. In many of the South African papers he was referred to as Lieutenant Cooke, of the Australian Air Force. Now plain Lieutenant is not an Air Force rank, and if Cooke was a lieutenant in the Cape militia, and had not severed his connection with the Royal Australian Air Force, I take it that the newspapers could refer to him as Lieutenant Cooke, and also state his connection with the Australian Air Force, and not be inaccurate. Of course, if Cooke had informed the *Cape Argus* people in Capetown that he held a commission in the Australian Air Force, and, as it was proved, he did not, he was gravely at fault--and very foolish. The details of how he received his honorary commission in the Cape militia, and on what grounds, I never learned. anyhow it is to be inferred that he practised some deception, for the newspaperman who called on me stated that he had cabled Point Cook asking if they knew anything of a Lieutenant Cooke and had received a reply stating that such an officer was not known to them. When Cooke was subsequently informed of that fact he admitted that he held no commission in the Air Force. He did not claim that he was entitled to style himself Lieutenant Cooke because of the honorary commission granted him in Capetown, so the presumption is that, some time before my arrival, he had definitely stated he held an Air Force commission. Whatever deception he had practised, he had kept it from me and the repudiation of any further interest in his venture by *The Johannesburg Star* came as a considerable shock to me. It was extremely mortifying. Cooke expressed his sorrow to me for having made a fool of himself and having placed our venture under a cloud. I told him I was going on with the job and he could please himself as

to his future course of action. He said he was going to give up the walk, but when I left Johannesburg the next day he decided to accompany me. We were not the same light-hearted pair who had set out from Capetown over a month before and endured the trials of the journey across the Karoo together. I sensed that a parting was imminent and felt heavy at heart. Whatever his failings, Cooke had been a splendid, care-free companion on the open road, and the long journey ahead, with its unknown hardships and perils, did not appear so alluring when I thought of the long months of lonely trekking to be made without a companion.

We passed through Pretoria together and three days later he left me where we had slept out on the open veldt, and returned to Johannesburg. He said he would join me later in the Congo, but was very vague about the means by which he would effect the reunion. As will be related, he very nearly effected his purpose, but he did not quite succeed, and I have never seen him since.

When he had disappeared down the road to Pretoria I sat myself down by the embers of our dying camp fire—the early morning air was cold—and took stock of my situation.

I had one Marlin 30.30 bore rifle, an automatic pistol, with some ammunition for both, a water-bottle, the khaki outfit and field boots I had on; two complete changes of clothing, and one of boots, in my pack, in addition to fleshing and skinning knives, a waterproof groundsheet, one blanket, and a greatly diminished supply of money. Civilization would be left behind before very long and I had over 6,000 miles of Africa yet to cross. Prospects then, did not appear of the brightest, but I shouldered my pack, slung my rifle, and started. I felt that I would get to Cairo somehow.

That first day of my lonely tramp remains clear in my mind. As the morning sun rose higher the heat increased rapidly. By noon the temperature must have

been above the 100 mark and all living things I passed—trees, cattle, natives—appeared to be wilting under the fierce blaze of a burning sun. The air was still. Not a wisp of cloud was visible across the wide arch of the smoky-blue sky. No streams cut through the parched bush-veldt. Perspiration oozed from every pore, and I was tempted to drain my water-bottle at a gulp, but decided to hang on until I reached a settlement. At a little hamlet called Radium I found a pump attached to which was a placard labelled "The Wonder Water". At one time Radium had promised to become an important place, as it was believed that the precious mineral after which it was named was present in the locality. Its fame was transient, however, and though the "wonder water" is still held by the local inhabitants to contain a percentage of the rare element, no hopes of the place ever becoming a fabulously wealthy locality are now entertained. I drank copiously of the fluid, however, and felt greatly refreshed, whether because of its wondrous qualities or not I do not know. It appealed to me as being just very good water.

On again through the stifling heat, I go. Through the haze ahead I make out the purple of a distant range—the Waterberg I know it to be. I will probably reach its base by nightfall. The tin walls of a little store come in view, and I am reminded that it is long past lunch hour, and I am hungry. The place boasts a name—Codrington—though no habitations are visible. At the store I manage to obtain a loaf of bread and a tin of corned beef before the storekeeper closes for the day, and goes off, leaving me seated on a pile of mealies on the stoep before the little shack. In attempting to open up the beef with a pocket knife I cut one of my fingers badly and the blood drips down on to the bread. I curse strongly. It is strange how little things annoy one. Cutting off the blood-stained portion of the loaf I set to hungrily on the remainder. The veldt is very quiet, and appears

desolate and lonely. I have a view of a wide sweep of it from the stoep. In places it is bare, in others dotted with sparse shrubs and yellowed grass. Two little piccanins appear—ebony tots clad in tattered, grimy shirts. In answer to a call they leave the mob of donkeys they are driving, and approach, wide-eyed and fearful. I offer them the remains of the repast and they accept in the eager manner usual to their kind. They go off again grinning happily and jabbering excitedly. The place is quite deserted once more. Across the dusty road the railway line lies shimmering in the heat—the line to Messina, on the Limpopo. I notice that the bags of mealies against which I am leaning are consigned by the S.A.S. (Suid-Afrikaanse Spoorree) —South African Railways— to Delagoa Bay. Those mealies will soon be taking a sea-voyage. The sea is a long, long way away from Clodrington on the bush-veldt of the Northern Transvaal. . . .

A large herd of long-horned African cattle pass, goaded on by several yelling "boys". Two young native belles, resplendent in blue gowns and rose-pink sashes and head-bands come by, chattering and laughing. They always are—a happy people. It is getting late. I have dallied an hour. A final swig from the water-bottle and I light another cigarette and go. . . .

Those banks of white cloud massing over the range in front mean a thunderstorm before long, in this country. I wish it *would* rain.

About 4 p.m. a vivid streak of heliotrope lightning flashes across the sky, thunder growls and a few spots of rain fall. The ground underfoot now is black-soil, dried up and criss-crossed with innumerable cracks. It crumbles to dust as heavy field boots crunch over it.

The storm threatens to break at any minute, and there is not a shelter in sight. A high wind springs up, the sun suddenly disappears behind frowning black cloud masses, that come up seemingly from nowhere, and then down comes the rain, heavy, soaking rain, accompanied by hail.

Away ahead rolls a thick cloud of red dust, blotting out the range completely.

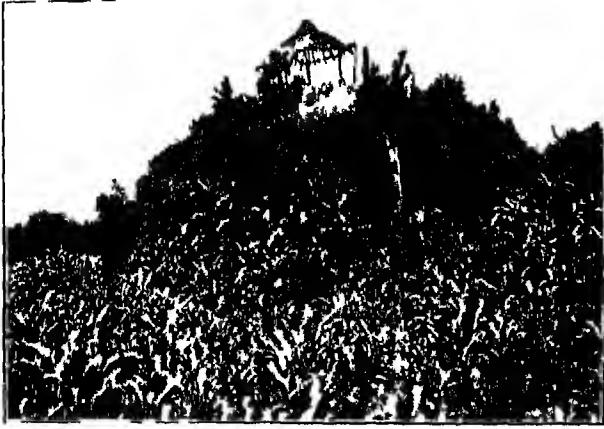
The black soil under foot changes to thick mud that clings in huge chunks to my boots, weighting them like lead. The high wind whirls the red dust towards me and soon it is impossible to see a yard around. Breathing becomes a difficulty, for the fine particles get into my nose and throat; my eyes smart, my ears are filled with the dust, and thin trickles of red mud run down my face, for the rain is still falling. My bare arms and clothes are stained red, and the sticky mud spatters my exposed chest. Rain, and a dust storm—it is a vile combination. Cloud upon cloud of the choking dust rolls in from the dry plains to the west, where, evidently no rain has fallen, and I am driven at length to take shelter in a Basuto kraal.

The place is inhabited only by women and about half a dozen naked children who appear terrified at my appearance. I succeed in reassuring them by a judicious distribution of threepenny bits, or "tikis", as they call them, and then a toddler, after surveying me gravely for a time, sees something humorous in my grimy face, with its five days' growth of beard, and becomes convulsed with merriment. The others join in, and we are soon all the best of friends. The women invite me to take a helping from the contents of a pot that is on a fire in the centre of the hut, but as the storm has cleared I decline and continue my way.

When I reached Warmbaths that night I had some difficulty in convincing the proprietor of one of the many hotels that cater for the tourists who come there to take the mineral baths, that I was not a suspicious character. After I had bathed, a young fellow, who assured me that he had followed the progress of the walk with interest, came to my room and gave me the benefit of his wide experience of African travel. He examined my kit, item by item, approving of part and criticising the usefulness of the remainder. After

warning me of the danger I would run of contracting sleeping-sickness, black-water fever, malaria, spirillum fever, dysentery and a few other ills, he concluded by informing me that I might conceivably reach my goal, but only on the condition that I discarded my helmet—and purchased one more suitable for a central African sun!

To confound that young man I stuck to my abused helmet to the end, and wore it continuously until Cairo was reached. It once played a part in saving my life.



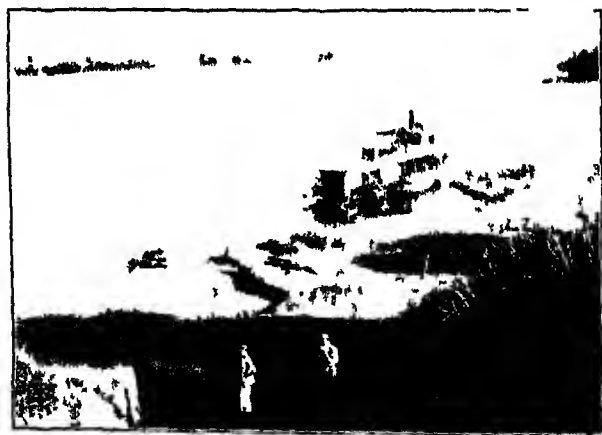
A typical overgrown Anthill N Rhodesia.



An old Warrior goes on *Safari*: Belgian Congo.



A Native Woman making Pottery



The great Luapula River, showing the Lake Mweru-Kasanga Paddle-Stream.

CHAPTER IV

A LONE TRAMP

THE NORTHERN TRANSVAAL—A LONELY LAND—THE TRAIL OF BLOOD—WITCHCRAFT—THROUGH THE ZOUTPANSBERG—INTO "THE OVEN"—MESSINA, AND THE BORDER—A TELEGRAM—HUMOURS OF HUNTING

THE NORTHERN TRANSVAAL in early summer is hot and dry. The bush-veldt then is silent, parched and dreary. Its intermittent streams have long since soaked away into their sandy beds, and before the first rains come the pleasant music of murmuring bush-land streams is never heard. Occasionally harsh bird cries break the silence. From the dead box-thorn trees the "Go-Away" bird calls despairingly; the rat-tat-tat of a busy rooicop houtcapper—the red headed wood-pecker—starts and ceases suddenly. The huge trunks and gnarled branches of the baobab, towering above the shadeless mopani and box-thorn scrub, provide the only shelter from the fierce heat, but myriads of tiny flies gather in their shade and so torment the traveller that he never tarries long. Across that uninviting land winds the dusty road to Messina and the Limpopo, the border-line of Southern Rhodesia.

After passing the Waterberg Range, I followed the road throughout the long hot days of late October, and on into November. Afoot at daybreak I marched with few rests by the wayside until sundown, covering 30 to 33 miles a day. It was monotonous travelling at first, for many days must pass before one becomes accustomed to travelling alone. There was little to

interest the eye, for the country had been in the grip of a drought for three years, and was even drier and barer than usual for that time of the year. Sometimes a snake would slither from the undergrowth across my path, but of other signs of life in that silent bush I saw little. Here and there I passed the putrid carcasses of donkeys and cattle, victims of the drought. The veldt seemed dead and deserted, and even the natives who passed occasionally appeared to be too affected by the heat to murmur the usual "Moê, Baas!" . . .

Reaching an English farm-house in the vicinity of Potgieter's Rust (Potgieter's resting place) late one afternoon I was told of the harrowing experiences of the old voor-trekkers who pioneered the district. Past the grim forbidding hills to the south and west they had come about 80 years before Schoemann, Louis Trichardt and old Potgieter, with their womenfolk and children. At a drift in a river flowing through the hills just beyond the farm the waggons had been outspanned and the men had gone hunting. The Magooba branch of the great Basuto tribe had descended from their kraals in the wild hills, attacked the outspan and murdered the women and children of Potgieter's party. I later passed the two large thorn trees against which the savages had dashed out the brains of their victims. The trees stand by the drift—now called Moord Drift (Murder Drift), a stone engraved with a cross marking the spot where the atrocity was committed. Later old Potgieter himself was murdered, and, his men, in revenge, rounded up his slayers, and, driving them to the summit of a steep mountain overlooking the drift, forced them to leap to their death on to the rocks below. Truly the district was pioneered in blood, and the mark of Cain appears to be seared widely across the drought-stricken country to this day.

On arriving at Pietersburg, a copper-mining centre, and the chief township of the Northern Transvaal, I was pleasantly surprised to meet Jim Wilson, who had

travelled up by train from Johannesburg to see how I was faring. He said he didn't like the idea of my tackling Africa on my own, and was considering the idea of throwing in his lot with me. I assured him I was beginning to like the lonely life, but admitted it would have its drawbacks later on. We spent the day in company and when his train departed for Johannesburg that evening I confess I felt a very lonely fellow in a very wide land. Jim was affected by the parting, too, I could see. I wondered when, if ever, I would see him again.

For long the direct road from Pietersburg to Messina and the Limpopo was barred by the Zoutpansberg range, a spur of the Drakensberg. When the railway was continued from the old terminus at Pietersburg a considerable detour to the west was necessary, and all travellers followed that route, as the Zoutpansberg was considered impassable for any kind of transport. Today however, a route passes over the range through a pass that is a veritable wonder of nature—the majestic Wylie's Poort.

From Louis Trichardt, a tiny dorp at the base of the range, I climbed steadily for a couple of hours, and then paused to look back at the first panorama that the walk had provided in 1,400 miles. It was a pleasant prospect, and one that thrilled me not a little. Far below was the tiny dorp, with its white houses and dark green groves. Across the veldt, running back from Louis Trichardt to Bandolier Kop, stretched a narrow white blaze—the dusty road which I had followed the previous day. On, over scrub-covered hillock and plain it ran, to disappear in the parched bush-veldt that had been my home for nearly a fortnight. Beyond the smoky blue haze obscuring the horizon I knew, kopje, dorp, and town lay sweltering in the blazing South African sun; away past the bustling Rand and dusty diamond fields, the wide Karoo was silent in the noon-day heat, parched, desolate and pitiful; still farther on, the snow-capped mountains of the Cape

were gleaming coldly, and their foaming cascades, as they tumbled down from crag to crag, were making music, that in fancy I could hear. The Union of South Africa stretched away below me, to Table Mountain and the sea—and I had tramped across it in 50 days! It was good to muse upon, that joyful fact.

Yet 6,000 miles, and more, remained to be attempted, so, taking a final glimpse of the world below, and moistening my parched throat with a swig from the water-bottle, I turned and began the passage of the Poort. Huge walls of rock, almost seeming to touch at their summits, towered high above me on either hand. The narrow gap in the ponderous granite cap of the range swung first to right and then to left and I followed its windings, ever expectant of more and more impressive mountain grandeurs. It was cool and pleasant in the shade of those rock faces that rose up sheer for 70 or 80 feet above the path, and I felt dwarfed, and slightly awed, when contemplating the mighty work of nature, for there was a cathedral stillness in the gorge. I completed the passage at length and commenced the steep descent of the northern face of the range.

Presently the deep murmuring note of hurrying waters falls on my ears, as if coming from afar off. The track now is passing round one of the upper edges of a deep ravine, canopied over with riotous growths of thick, leafy interlacing creepers and other tropical foliage that hide its bed from sight. The descent from the road is almost sheer, but running water is ever a lure for me, and I force a passage through the entangling growths. At times crawling on all fours, at others slipping and sliding for several yards, I descend into the cool depths, and reach the stream that bubbles over roots and miniature cataracts, disappears beneath the undergrowth, and gushes out again through half a dozen channels to boil madly where they meet. So deeply wooded is the ravine that the sky is shut from view. Monkeys fly through the tree-tops as I follow

down the stream, and animals scuttle into the undergrowth before I can catch a glimpse of them. Around a bend the stream widens out and forms a pleasant pool. I halt suddenly, for I am intruding on a damsel's bower. Two nude and dusky beauties stand knee-deep in the pool, scooping up the water in their cupped hands and splashing it on their glistening bodies. That the scene was not set for a blundering male's eyes, the startled maidens make abundantly clear. As I swing my camera from my shoulder they scramble wildly from the water, and wrapping their sparse girdles about them, stand abashed and fearful by the edge. I laugh away their fears and at last they do consent to pose for as pretty a sylvan picture as one could come upon.

I climbed back to the road then, for I did not know what I might stumble on around the next bend—and besides, progress through that leafy maze was becoming increasingly difficult. Later the stream crossed the road, and by its edge I sat and lunched on dry bread and ice cold water. Baboons came down out of the trees and advanced uncertainly to drink some paces from me. The slightest movement I made sent them scampering back to the trees, barking protests at the intrusion on their haunts. Whenever a twig cracked near me I wondered what next would saunter from the bush. Lions and leopards are not infrequently seen in the locality, and when, for the first time, one is aware that the great cats may show themselves, and that there will be no protecting cage bars to keep them at a distance, the feeling one gets is not exactly exhilarating. Musing there, it was easy to imagine myself a lone traveller in the African jungle. A pleasant conceit, but it was soon banished. Before tramping a mile more I was out of the "jungle" and into the parched wilderness once more, with the sun blazing down more fiercely than ever. After crossing the Zoutpansberg one passes down into what may justly be termed the oven of the Transvaal. From October to March the

heat is terrific. Rain falls but seldom, and then comes during thunderstorms that follow particularly severe spells of blistering heat.

That night I came to the small cattle ranch run by an Englishman named Cheesby. Big game, he told me, was plentiful from his place onwards. Cattle ranchers were troubled by herds of wildebeeste, which smashed down fences and ate out the sparse pastures. All manner of antelope were numerous, elephant were occasionally seen, monkeys and baboons were a pest, and hyenas and jackals—and sometimes lions and leopards—harassed the mules and cattle. The deadly mamba, the most dreaded of all African snakes, too, often slithered in from the surrounding brushwood and came up to the house stoeps. Puff adders and tree snakes, too, were much in evidence in the locality, and horrible tales were told me illustrating their sudden-death dealing powers. It all sounded to me as if Africa—the Africa where lively adventure might be had without searching for it—was near at hand at last.

Water was scarce over the final 40 miles stage to Messina, there being but one brackish pan at which I could replenish my water bottle between Cheesby's run and the township. The heat was scorching from the moment the sun slipped into the sky, and as the day advanced it became almost unbearable. The mopani scrub, the only greenery along the route, wilted under the fierce blaze, and its cloven leaves folded up so that only faint shadows were cast upon the dry powdery dust. There was no shade to be had from them. The slightest movement caused perspiration to ooze from every pore; walking sent it trickling down my face and body until my clothing was saturated with it, and the straps of my pack, water bottle and camera were sodden.

I could not permit myself more than a few sips from my water bottle at a time, and throughout that wearisome day my mind ran on clear, cool water, and I cursed myself for a fool for not having loitered by the

torrent in the Poort and gulped its icy coldness down my throat for an hour on end. It was with a feeling of devout thankfulness when, late in the afternoon, I was guided by a small herd of lean cattle to the water-pan I had been told about—a slimy pool of muddy-tasting fluid a short distance from the track. I flung myself down full-length beside it and drank deeply, sieving the slime through my teeth. I then ate a couple of hard-boiled eggs and hunks of bread and cheese—my first food since early morning—and stretched out to enjoy the luxury of a cigarette and a rest. Life on the road did not seem so bad at all, after that.

It wanted about an hour to sun-down when I rose and made my way a little farther to the house of the Dutch farmer who owned the lean cattle. He greeted me casually, in the slow, uncertain manner of his kind, and we sat in the filthy black sand outside his house for an hour watching a litter of ungainly, flea-bitten puppies rolling in the dust, while we drank cup after cup of vile black “coffee”, made, I think, from roasted kaffir-corn husks, mixed with ground bark. Then the cattle came home, driven by a couple of shouting native boys, and dust rose in choking clouds while they were being kraaled for the night within the protecting thorn-bush barricades. The stars came out, and we went into a little furnace-like room and ate fried eggs and drank more “coffee” by the light of an old oil lamp that increased the temperature appreciably. I suspect that the farmer and his wife, despite their assertions to the contrary, gave up their own bed to me that night. There was no water for washing purposes. I had filled my water bottle at the pan and with its contents I swilled the worst of the day’s grime from my face, and as much of the rest of me as it would extend to, and sank into a dreamless slumber.

The next morning, taking with me the remains of the then stale bread and butter and the hard-boiled eggs which I had had from Mistress Cheesby on the pre-

vious morning, I set out for Messina. The day was another scorcher, cloudy, but no cooler for that. The water obtained from my host of the night before was unpleasantly brackish and I chewed mopani leaves in an attempt to keep off the ravages of thirst. Such substitutes for water, are, however, only efficacious when one merely thinks he is thirsty. I was *really* thirsty by mid-day, and it was an agreeable surprise when I came unexpectedly on a camp by the Zande River—dry at that season. From the lone occupant—a cheery, grizzled “Old-timer”—I learned that a company had intended to commence manufacturing paper—pulp from the baobab trees growing in profusion thereabouts, had placed three men on the site—Mcalic Pap camp, it was called—and then, for some reason or other, decided not to go on with the undertaking. Two of the men were in Messina at the moment, having, according to the account of their disgusted partner, taken a few chairs and a table to trade for liquor, and left him on his own indefinitely. He was pleased to see me. We cursed the heat and the flies in company, watched the baboons sneaking across the veldt, and then, having drained some real tea—beverage without equal, as every Australian knows—I set off at a lively pace to cover the nine miles to Messina, hoping to reach it in time for lunch. I was tired of hard-boiled eggs. For some miles I followed the spoor of a leopard and came at length on the remains of a kudu that it had apparently killed and partially eaten. At 1.20 p.m. Messina copper mine came in view. A few minutes later I saw the township at the base of a kopje, climbed a few bare, brown hills and was in the sun-baked collection of galvanised iron that is Messina. (Townships in the hottest parts of South Africa and Australia, for some obscure reason, are invariably built of galvanised iron.) It was 1.35 p.m. when I arrived; at 1.40 I had drained three long glasses of ice-cold beer—they have ice at Messina—and had not felt them. A bath, a glorious lunch, with courses, table-napkins,

waiters, pleasant company, and all those satisfying adjuncts to a civilised meal, and then I was free to enjoy my second afternoon's respite from walking since commencing my lone journey of nearly 400 miles. A thunderstorm broke that afternoon. The wind sprang up, the dust rose, thunder rattled and boomed, and across the wide arch of a gloomy sky spectacular heliotrope lightning flashed and crackled. Then came the rain—glorious pattering, splashing rain, laying the dust, cooling and washing earth and air and shrub: Messina's first bath in a twelvemonth!

While lunching at the Messina Hotel the day following my arrival a "boy" brought a telegram which was destined to have an important bearing on the history of the Cape to Cairo walk. It was from Jim Wilson, asking me to wait at Messina until November 16th—it was then November 5th—as he intended joining me!

It was some moments before I could grasp fully what that message would mean to me. During that lonely tramp through the Northern Transvaal I had been adapting myself to the idea of a year of solitary wandering, had given myself over to the contemplation of difficulties and dangers to be faced alone, of days and nights cut off from my kind—and I had wondered how things would end with a man who was presumptuous enough to tackle the mighty task of tramping through Africa alone. At times high hopes had set my pulses athrob with the joy of the adventure, at others, misgivings had come to me. Never in my wildest imaginings had I thought that at that late hour another would be willing to follow the long trail, with its uncertainties and hardships, with me. It was not an undertaking that any could be expected to embark upon at short notice, and now here was my good friend, Wilson, intending to turn from the comforts and calls of home, renounce for a year at least, his profession, and embark on a venture that I knew he believed in his heart was a rash one.

CHAPTER V

BEYOND THE LIMPOPO

A JOYFUL MEETING—INTO SOUTHERN RHODESIA—SIZZLING HEAT—
TRIALS IN A DROUGHT STRICKEN LAND—A RHODESIAN RANCH—A
ROADSIDE COMEDY—BULAWAYO—A WHITE KAFFIR—LOBENGULA'S
COUNTRY

JIM WILSON stepped off the train from Johannesburg on the afternoon of November 16. It was a joyful meeting, and when the door of our room at the hotel closed on us, we talked over our immediate plans like school-boys discussing the first big adventure of their lives. Jim's kit for the trek was similar to mine in every particular, and his enthusiasm for the future was as unbounded as mine, though it is true he was disposed to give more thought to practical details.

The first day together we contented ourselves with making a late start and tramped but nine miles to the border, where we stayed the night with Corporal Evans and his "half section" at the police post. The Limpopo was dry, and we crossed by the sandy drift above the fourteen stout cement piers of the Beit Memorial bridge, which was then in the course of construction. Within a few years a railway will pass over that bridge from West Nicholson and Bulawayo and the final link in a further line of communication between Rhodesia and the Union of South Africa will be forged. Shortly after we passed, the Limpopo came down in full flood, and communication by road between the two possessions was broken at that point, until the following dry season. In previous years a pontoon, operated by a private concern, took some of the road traffic, but its

operation was uncertain and hampered by full floods, and the only sure route north from the Union was along the railway through Bechuanaland, by way of Mafeking, away to the west. With the opening of the Beit Memorial bridge eight months after we passed the Limpopo, permanent road communication was established.

We did see some Limpopo water—down in the famous rocky gorge above the drift. Three dead crocodiles, that Evans had shot on the previous day were floating in it. The Limpopo is infested with the brutes, but although we waited long by the pools in hopes of getting a shot, none put in an appearance.

Next morning we began our trek across Southern Rhodesia. Each of us carried a rifle, thirty rounds of ammunition, a blanket, a water-bottle and various sundries in our packs. We also carried a "billy-can," without which no Australian would take the road on foot. It amazed us later to learn that some folk did not know what a "billy-can" was. It is a can with a wire loop handle, is always black and filthy from the fire, on the exterior, and "billy"-made tea is the finest beverage known to semi-civilized man. The tea leaves and sugar are generally mixed together and then thrown into the water in the can when it is at the boil. Milk is unnecessary, but if one must have it, it should be Nestle's, to be in keeping with the best traditions associated with the Australian swagman's beverage. When the lid of the "billy" is lost a green twig may be placed across the top of the can to save the water from being "smoked." I do not know why, but it is always done. It is perhaps advisable not to lose the lid.

Rhodesia, too, had long been in the grip of a devastating drought, and, late as was the season, the rains had not then broken. Our route between the Limpopo and Bulawayo, 230 miles on, lay across very sparsely populated country, most of which was given over to cattle ranching. At that season it was parched and scorched by the blistering heat of many rainless days. The

mopani scrub was less green than it had been further south, and shadeless thorn bushes appeared even more withered and bare. In the early stages of that trying walk we saw huge lumbering bullock and donkey waggons piled high with zebra skins going down to the rail-head at Messina. Grazing was terribly scarce; there was not nearly sufficient for the cattle herds, and the ranchers had been compelled to enter on a campaign of slaughter of all kinds of game. Hundreds of beautiful zebra were being sacrificed every month. It was a pitiable land we had entered.

That first day in Rhodesia was a sore trial to both of us, but particularly to Jim, who was new to the road, and had to suffer the tortures of walking in tight boots. By noon the shade temperature must have been in the neighbourhood of 110 degrees Fahrenheit, and we were forced to call a halt in the bed of a dry water-course for a couple of hours. In the meagre shade of a giant thorn we made a "billy" of tea, and then yarned and slept until mid-afternoon.

Our progress was slow after starting again, for the heat was almost unbearable, and trudging the seemingly-unending white road through thirsty, featureless country became a nightmare task. It took us until 7.30 p.m. to cover the 17 miles to Mtetengwe police post, and we arrived tired out, hungry and thirsty.

There was a Jewish storekeeper at the post, with his beautiful young wife—the only residents, apart from the two police officers. Most of their trade is done with natives, and it is rarely that they entertain white people. Knowing that, we were doubly surprised when, at their table that night, a delightful hostess, charmingly gowned, bade us to cease toying with the olives, the asparagus, the chicken and the fruit, and to eat. "Billy" tea for lunch, ambrosial wine with our dinner! We were too overcome to do that lavish repast full justice.

Water, we knew, would be our gravest problem in the week to follow. All the water-courses in the first

110 miles were dried up, and it was problematical if supplies could be obtained by digging. After leaving Mtetengwe we would touch only at two ranches before reaching the first running water, and our water-bottles held only two pints each—painfully little for men carrying packs through that inferno of dust and heat.

Our experiences on the second day of our tramp through Southern Rhodesia decided us that day walking, until rain fell, was out of the question. From Mtetengwe to the headquarters of Leibig's ranch, at Mazunga, is but 16 miles, but the heat was even greater than on the previous day. Shade there was none, and our water gave out before mid-afternoon. When the air stirred slightly it seared our parched faces like a furnace blast. The white track which we were following gave back the sun's rays in a blinding glare. No one who has not commenced continuous long trekking under such trying conditions can appreciate just what Wilson must have suffered that day—breaking in walking boots is a real torture under almost any circumstances. Finally he was compelled to sit down in the dust and rest, while I pushed on to the Mazunga River to search for water, my sufferings having been much less acute because long tramping had hardened my feet thoroughly. During the day, we had passed numbers of emaciated kudu, impala and other antelope, too weakened by the drought to run from us. While making for the river course I saw more of the suffering beasts heading in the same direction. They were pitiable to watch. Great kudu bucks, the noblest looking of all antelope, stumbled through the dry mopani scrub, their magnificent curling antlers lowered, all their proud bearing gone. At times they halted, their flanks heaving, their limbs trembling—pathetic looking beasts that were so broken by suffering that they ignored me as I passed. I succeeded in filling my water bottle at a hole in the river bed, and started back on my tracks. I coo-ee'd to Jim to advise him that I had found the precious liquid, but could hear no answering shout. More than a little alarmed I hurried

on, and presently found my "half-section" lying on some blisteringly hot rocks beneath a withered tree. He had tried to come on, but the pain of his almost crippled feet, coupled with the exhausting effects of thirst and heat, had proved too much for him. The water revived him, and after a rest he was able to struggle on again. When we reached the ranch headquarters that evening, we decided to halt the following day and march by moonlight. It was as well we acted on that plan. At noon the ranch thermometer registered 120 degrees in the shade!

Night walking, with its camp-fire watches, while we each in turn slept a few hours, and trekked on again before the dawn, was a welcome change for a time, but the lack of shade made it impossible to sleep during the daytime, and often we found ourselves doing little better than stumbling along almost half asleep. The night before we reached the second ranch—"Daddy" Lane's holding—Wilson's feet were paining so badly that he had to remove his boots and pad along barefoot. We were weak, too, through lack of sufficient food, as we had to exist on a meagre supply of rice—all we were capable of carrying in our packs. We reached Lane's place just about "all in." The day we spent with the hospitable rancher and his wife will live long in our memories. We felt as men reprieved from torture.

Through a fresher and fairer world we passed next day; to West Nicholson, the rail-head of the spur line from Bulawayo. We covered 22 miles and finished fresh at the end of it. The Umsingwane River which passes by the township was running a "banker" and we enjoyed the heavenly luxury of a swim. That night we retired to rest in one of the many little rondavels—cylindrical little mud-walled, thatched-roofed structures, seen all over Africa—that were clustered round the police post.

From West Nicholson we sent our burdensome packs on by train, and set off with light hearts over the 120 mile stretch to the capital of Matabeleland. The



Youthful Fishermen of the Luapula



A Native Fisherman in his Dugout seeking a Spot to Plant
his Cane Fish-Trap



My Dugout on the Luapula



A Quiet Smoke

country was much greener and farms were more numerous. Rain fell almost every day, and for the first time on the journey we experienced the mixed joy of plodding along through the mud, drenched to the skin.

One evening, just as we were casting about for a suitable halting place for the night—which threatened to be stormy—we came to a Kaffir kraal, and one of the natives guided us to a little trading store. The Jewish proprietor was away at the neighbouring township of Gwanda, but his house-boy provided us with supper, and then showed us to a little rondavel containing two beds. He assured us in “kitchen” Kaffir that no one would be requiring them that night. We had no qualms about accepting the owner’s hospitality during his absence, as custom in Rhodesia provides that travellers may avail themselves of lodging in such circumstances. A note left with the house-boy before departure is all that is required.

Invariably at the end of a day we slept like dead men until daybreak, and that night was no exception, save for an interlude that occurred about midnight. Near that hour I was startled from the soundest of sleeps by a blood-curdling yell that came from the direction of Jim’s bed. In the space of a fraction of a second a succession of horrible suppositions raced through my sleep-dulled brain, which was doing its best to operate along useful lines at the short notice given it. Marauding lions, murdering niggers, deadly snakes, and homicidal maniacs, were rapidly considered as having been responsible for my “half-section’s” death yell. While my ears rang with the horrible cry, I fought to regain my complete senses. With one hand I grabbed my rifle, and with the other reached out to intercept the murderers in their nefarious intentions. By the time I was fully awake I found I was half out of bed, and had a strong grip on the arm of a small, elderly Jew who was quaking with terror and quite unable to speak coherently. By the light of the moon I could see his ugly,

unshaven face twitching pitifully, his eyes were bulging and his lips were moving, though no words would come. I removed my gun-barrel from under his chin and lighted a candle. The comedy that was revealed so convulsed me that for five minutes I was helpless. Jim was sitting up in bed surrounded by an avalanche of heavy parcels. It was clear what had happened. Our host had brought home a friend from Gwanda to spend the night. Not knowing that we were installed in the rondavel the poor fellow had groped his way in and dumped an armful of weighty parcels on to what he believed was an empty bed. They had caught Jim fairly on the bare chest! How the old fellow lived through the succeeding seconds I do not know. The experience must have shortened his span of years considerably.

Explanations were made, we apologised, our host expressed his sorrow at our having been disturbed, and we again settled down to slumber. It was some time before I could ease the tickling round my ribs.

The Matoppa Hills, in which Cecil Rhodes lies buried, showed forth from their purple draperies of mist some days later, and after wading several racing rivers we started to climb the foothills.

On November 27 we climbed through them for 32 miles, and at 7 o'clock that evening a ring of winking lights on a distant rise told us we were in sight of Lobengula's Kraal—the modern Bulawayo. It was another stage ended—and Capetown lay over 1,600 miles behind.

Jim's chief from Johannesburg who had been up in the Congo on a combined business and pleasure trip met us on our way into the town next morning. The last time they had met, Jim had been keeping a watchful eye on his business interests. Journalists may be expected to do all manner of strange things—"looking for copy" is the explanation put forward on their behalf—but a perfectly good accountant should know better than to go foot-slogging over Africa. I fancied



THE ZAMBESI RIVER

those thoughts were in the chief's mind as he greeted us and looked me over. Apparently he forgave us, however, for he straightway invited us to dine with him. A little piece of advice which he gave us, we would have done well to follow. From Bulawayo onwards, we should, he told us, take a daily dose of quinine. The rains were about to start in earnest, and the danger of contracting malaria in the wet season in Central Africa would be great, if we failed to take quinine regularly. Unfortunately South Africans had insisted on the harmful effects of quinine if taken regularly, and had urged us not to take it, until we felt the fever coming on.

There was much to be arranged in Bulawayo. Normally the traveller wishing to proceed into the heart of Central Africa from Bulawayo, follows the course of the railway, which swings out to the north-west to Livingstone and the Victoria Falls, and then sweeps back north-east to Kafue, from which point it continues due north to the Belgian Congo. For Wilson and me, the beaten track offered little allurements, and moreover the detour to the west would add a couple of hundreds of miles to our journey. We cast about to find a more direct route. Away to the north of Bulawayo, across the Shangani River, as far as the Zambesi, and beyond, to the malaria-infested swamps of Death Valley, stretch the uncharted, little known, virgin forests of the Bubi, Shangani and Sebungwe Matabele reserves. There, in that wide land of rushing rivers and unnamed mountains the descendants of the warrior chief, Lobengula, rule the remnants of the tribes that rose in revolt in 1896-7. Much of it is infested with the terrible stinging tsetse fly, the annihilator of four-footed animal life, and the carrier of the incurable sleeping-sickness. Elephant herds, buffalo, some few antelope and baboons have sanctuary there, for civilized man avoids it. The paths he may take do not run that way. Yet, having heard the worst concerning it, we were tempted to try and find a passage through. The Superintendent of Natives for Matabeleland (Colonel G. L. Carbutt) had traversed

a portion of it in the course of his duties, and he very graciously went into the question of possible routes with us. Finally we decided on the attempt. Colonel Carbutt made arrangements for us to pick up porters at a Native Commissioner's post at Inyati, 40 miles out, on the fringe of the reserves, and gave introductions to the Native Commissioner at Gokwe, a second post further into the heart of the country. At Gokwe we would discuss the best route to continue on past the Zambesi to Kafue, where we hoped to strike the railway to the Congo.

Mosquito nets, a light silk tent, a water bag, ammunition for 30.30 Marlin and Springfield rifles and a few other odds and ends of camp gear, we picked up in Bulawayo, and on December 3, 1928, we started for Inyati.

Striking due north from the town we saw before us a long low ridge of purple hills. Above them hung a dark mass of thunderous black clouds, stretching from eastern horizon to western, and completely shutting off the gloomy-looking world into which we were venturing. We wondered deeply what lay in store for us beyond.

Early in that march we came on a weird sight that brought us up with something of a shock. We were approaching one of the several farms lying just outside Bulawayo, when we observed two individuals conversing by the side of the track. Coming closer we concluded that one was the owner of the farm—a Dutchman, judging by his appearance. The other was a creature, the like of which we had never before clapped eyes upon. Dressed in the usual dilapidated khaki trousers and shirt worn by natives on the fringe of civilization in Rhodesia, he looked like a huge ape that had put on man's clothing—yet an ape of an entirely new species. Beneath one hairy arm he carried a pair of heavy boots, that were surely the largest ever made, and his huge misshapen feet were bare. His enormous head sagged forward on a thick bull neck and hung grotesquely between his great hunched-up

shoulders. His skin was mottled, and a dirty creamy yellow in colour. His short woolly hair closely resembled that of a true negro's save that it, too, was a creamy yellow. Heavy coarse features added to his negroid appearance, but his long powerful arms more resembled those of an ape than a human being. Altogether he was a repulsive sight. He was one of those strange biological freaks known as a White Kaffir. We later saw two more of the species. In each case they were born of black parents and had no European blood in their veins whatever, despite their peculiar light colouring. All were abnormal, half-witted fellows.

We had tea with the Dutch farmer, but he, too, proved something of a freak, for while we were sitting in his dining-room, at his invitation, waiting for a shower to cease, he bounced in out of the rain, and, muttering something about people being murdered in their homes, told us to go. We went—readily.

The rains broke before we reached Inyati—heavy soaking rains that flooded forest and veldt, and brought down the rivers in rushing torrents of red, foam-flecked waters. Crazy bridges that spanned the deepest of the streams, held long enough to afford us a safe passage, though we heard that they were swept away shortly after we passed. Splashing through water, that at times came up to our knees, we came eventually to Inyati, that isolated outpost where, on March 27, 1896, Native Commissioners Graham and Handley and six others were killed, after a desperate fight with 300 local Matabele. The Commissioner and his wife received us very hospitably, and though Greer was convinced that we were mad in attempting to cross the 400 miles of country ahead of us, travelling as we were, he agreed to find us porters for the stage to Gokwe, when he knew we were not to be dissuaded from our purpose.

The obtaining of porters proved a little difficult, although we wanted but three. None of the local natives wanted to go. The matter was finally settled

by Greer sending out to a road gang 15 miles off, and calling in three prisoners. They did not look very promising. One, Ndalamane, was a Matabele "boy". He had a furtive air, but he knew the route to Gokwe, and that was more important in our eyes. The other two were Batonkas, from the Zambesi country—weedy, primitive dwarfs, whose appearance did not suggest the staying powers they ultimately showed they possessed. One rejoiced in the name of Jakalasi (the Jackal, a name obviously derived from the English) and the other was called Machina. Ndalamane's name translated meant "Lung Disease", and as he was a confirmed malingerer we came to suspect that he had adopted the name, so that he could impose on his fellows by persuading them that it was conferred on him because of an inherent constitutional weakness. Actually he was perfectly sound in wind and limb. We did not trust him over-much so made him our "boss boy". It is often an effective way of getting some good out of a malingerer, giving him some measure of responsibility. Ndalamane accepted the office readily.

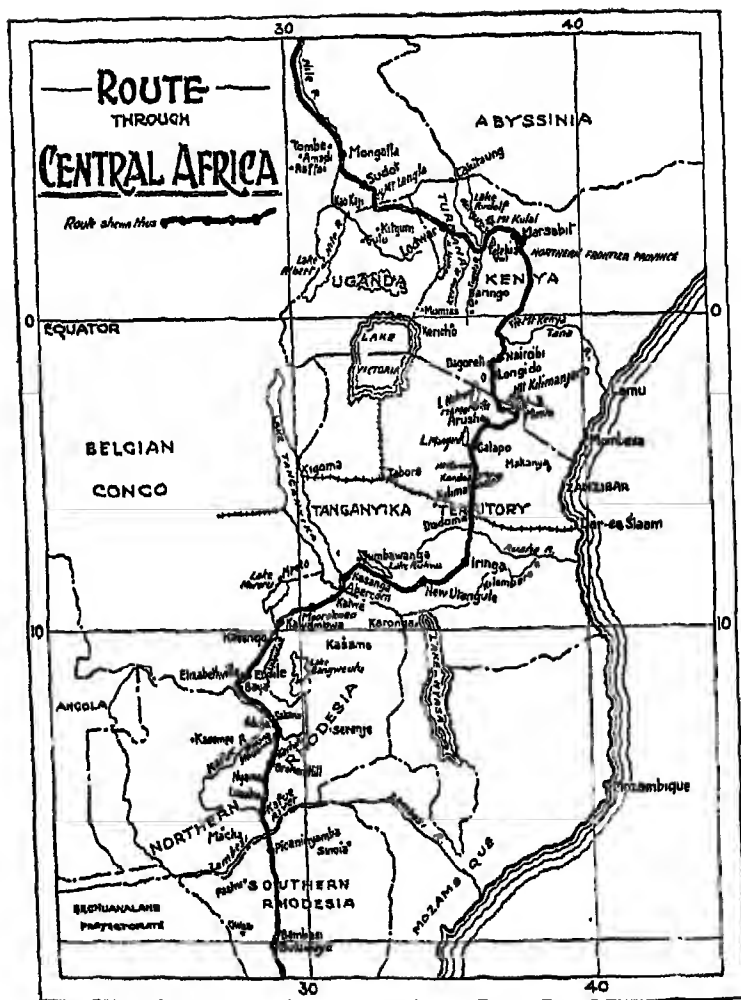
With the limited transport at our disposal, we had to restrict our baggage to a minimum. For the 145 miles trek to Gokwe post, where we hoped to obtain further food supplies, our larder consisted of 50 lbs. of mealie meal, 6 lbs. of rice, 5 lbs. of salt, for trading for eggs, etc., 4 lbs. of sugar, 3 lbs. of tea, 3 packets of dried fruits, some cigarettes and a small quantity of tinned stuff. We were not intending to live in luxury. We each carried 75 rounds of ammunition, and we hoped that we would be able to eke out our farinaceous diet with a little meat.

At Inyati Greer pointed out to us a native dandy, dressed in riding habit, complete with spurs and leggings—although, owing to the prevalence of tsetse fly, no horse could live within miles of the district—who was, he said the son and heir of the long-departed Lobengula. He said that the fellow was likely to be

hailed before him in his capacity as District Magistrate, before long because of some "indaba" (trouble) in which the fellow had recently been concerned. It appeared that another of Lobengula's sons, one Jakalasa—no relation to our porter—had died at a kraal 50 miles out in the Bubi Reserve. Now, to the native mind there is no such thing as death from natural causes. Some supernatural agency is responsible for the failing health and death of every native who goes the way of all flesh. In this particular case Jakalasa's death was attributed to the exercise of dark and mysterious powers by some of the young chief's enemies. On hearing the tidings, the brother from Inyati had hurried to his brother's village, had the supposed culprits seized and tied to stakes, and then cruelly flogged. Some had had their limbs broken, and an officer of the British South African police had been sent out to investigate, in company with a doctor. They had not returned when we left Inyati, but we were to meet them later. The officials responsible for maintaining law and order among the natives of the remote parts of Africa, have many an unusual case to investigate. Rainmakers are a continual source of trouble to the native administrators. They are crafty folk, whose practice is to go about the villages after a period of drought, but at a time when their knowledge of the seasons tells them that the rains cannot be long delayed, exercising their "powers" of witchcraft to make rain. They perform some solemn rites, murmur some secret incantations, promise that rain will come shortly, and having levied a tribute of grain from the already depleted stocks, move on to gull more trusting villagers. They cause a great deal of mischief, as, should their spell not produce the promised rain, they are not above ascribing the failure to the counter-efforts of an evilly-disposed dabbler in black magic, and his "removal" is decreed. One old crone had been particularly active in the rain-making business in the reserves,

about the time we were passing through, and the Commissioner was about to have her laid by the heels. Supposed sorcerers have to be very carefully watched, for the poor impressionable native believes implicitly in their dark powers, and will commit many strange crimes under their influence.

Overnight we concentrated on the study of a few Sentabele phrases. It was necessary that we should have some knowledge of the language of the people with whom we would be in contact for the next month, for it was unlikely that we would meet any white men at all, after leaving Gokwe. We were about to leave civilization behind for a long time. That day a runner had come through from Bulawayo with the last tidings from the world outside that we were destined to hear until early in the new year. We learned that England had defeated Australia by 675 runs in the first Test match at Brisbane!



THE MIDDLE STAGE

CHAPTER VI

HEART OF MATABELELAND

INTO THE UNKNOWN—OUR FIRST SAFARI—INSECT PESTS—LOST IN THE FOREST—RACING THE RIVERS—VISITED BY A CROCODILE—MATABELE VILLAGE LIFE—EXILES—GOKWE—SAPALADZA OF THE LIONS—A ZAMBESI EDEN—CHRISTMAS ON THE RIVER KAFUE

OUR THREE stalwarts—Ndalamane, Jakalasa and Machina—stood lined up before the Commissioner's house, each with his 50 lb. load beside him, early the following morning.

We took leave of our hosts, checked over the loads, and then, trying to appear as if we had been accustomed to *safari* life for years, gave the command "Tina humber katesi" ("We will start now").

It worked. Our first *safari* started.

Following a narrow native track we headed slightly east of north, crossed the headwaters of the Ingwenkwisi within the first mile, and were soon deep in the virgin, rain-soaked forest.

The porters' $3\frac{1}{4}$ -mile-an-hour gait appeared painfully slow to us, as we had grown accustomed to striding at from 4 to $4\frac{1}{2}$ miles an hour, but repeated exhortations to them to "checha" (hurry), producing no effect, we were forced to content ourselves with their effort. Thin drizzling rain started to fall after about 10 miles had been covered and the slippery clay soil that gave an uncertain foothold checked our progress somewhat. For all that we toiled on cheerfully, and covered 15 miles before we stopped at a collection of native kraals for lunch. To each porter we served out a pound of mealie-meal—half of their

day's allowance—and set about boiling some prunes and rice for ourselves. The boys' method of preparing their food was simple. The maize meal was placed in a pot, mixed with water, and boiled over a slow fire. When it had been stirred to the consistency of a thick dough, they squatted around the pot on their haunches, and diving their hands into the mess in turn, pulled out great chunks of it, which they crammed into their mouths greedily.

A rain-storm broke while we were draining our mugs of coffee-and-milk, and drove us into one of the evil-smelling kraals until it had cleared somewhat. By that time the forest was flooded, and the path which we had been following was a miniature torrent. We were somewhat perturbed, as we had hoped to pass the Bubi River before nightfall, and the chances were that the rain would bring it down in flood, and halt us until we could contrive a means of crossing. There were no bridges over any of the rivers in the country ahead. We urged the "boys" on and they, fearing the same possibility as ourselves, did their best. We made the stream in time, for it was a mere trickle at the point we crossed it, but we knew that the full rush of waters from its upper reaches could be expected at any moment, and considered ourselves fortunate. Our luck could not be expected to hold. In the weeks ahead our trek would resolve itself into a race with the rivers, if we were to avoid long delays.

By clear cool sheets of water, where soft green mimosa and mopani bush cast their clear reflections, across rolling expanses of meadow-like grassland, over ridges and through valleys where ostrich and antelope roamed in large numbers, we trekked, penetrating deeper and deeper into the vast bushland solitudes. There was a zest in being afoot those chilly mornings, when the green, fresh trees were dripping rain, and when the sun warmed up the forest and bird-song filled the air, marching was a sheer joy.

Underfoot the grasses swarmed with gaudy-coloured insect life—scarlet cochineal and a score of other species of varied hues, the names of which we did not know. It was good to fill a pipe and drop behind the small *safari*, to smoke and muse an hour or two. As Gordon sang, of a similar time of day in our own land—

“ ’Twas merry in the glowing morn, among the gleaming grass,
To wander as we’ve wandered many a mile,
To blow the cool tobacco cloud and watch the white wreaths
pass.”

We had our first taste of “the wine of the country”—kaffir beer—at a native village one evening.

While the boys were preparing a camp site just beyond a little stream we went among the kraals, seeking to purchase a chicken for supper. The Induna (petty Chief), his witch-doctor, and another elder of the tribe, came forth from a dark, smoke-filled little hut to greet us. “Inkoos! Inkoos!” (Masters! Masters!) they murmured thickly and then stood deferentially in line before us, sagging at the knees and swaying slightly, each senile countenance set in an expression of seraphic joy. They were very drunk.

“Tina funa nkuku”, we said. It should have conveyed to them that we wanted a chicken, but the old Induna merely murmured “Inkoos! Inkoos!” and smiled his friendly smile. I produced a little tobacco and handed it to the ancient. The gift roused him from his stupor. He sniffed it lovingly, and calling his tribe around him, had the weed passed among them, to sniff and commend—and pass back. Ndalamane, a scheming opportunist, ever on the alert to profit from his association with the revered white men, arrived on the scene at that juncture, and commenced telling lies about the prowess of his mighty masters, in the native fashion. By enhancing our standing in the eyes of his gullible fellows, he incidentally enhanced his own. After duly impressing

the Induna and his awed followers with tales concerning our imagined prowess, he relieved the old fellow of half the tobacco we had given him, and evened matters up by arranging for us to purchase two *nkuku* (chickens) at double the correct price. Ndalamane was always generous with our wealth, until we tumbled to his little schemes.

When we expressed a desire to sample some Kaffir beer the Induna was desolated. They had just finished the last of the supply. As we moved over to our tent, however, with our squawking chickens, we saw the ancient toper running off through the forest and we guessed that he was heading for another village to get us some of the beverage. Our surmise proved correct for we had just completed laying down our beds of leaves in our tent, when he came up with his favourite wife, who carried a large gourd of beer on her head. Giving us greeting, he squatted down before us and waited in silence for us to drink. We each drained a couple of mugs of the sour stuff, and voted it fair enough, though we should have preferred it with the crushed mealies, from which it was made, strained off. It is not very intoxicating, but the natives desiring a carouse get over that drawback by absorbing extraordinarily large quantities of it. The Induna and his lady finished off the remainder of the gourd's contents before they left us to our supper of boiled chicken and rice.

Reaching the Shangani River late one morning, Ndalamane advised us that he was uncertain of his path, and said that it would be wiser if, instead of crossing the river at that point, we followed it down some miles until we reached a crossing place he knew of. From that point, he assured us, he would be able to lead us direct to Gokwe. It meant going perhaps a day's march from the direct route, but there was nothing for it but to follow his counsel. For mile after mile we followed the river and then to our great surprise we saw the thatched roof of a large European



The end of our Canoeing. Below Chipapa's Kiaal on
the Luapula.



Native Herdboys making Loin-Cloths from Bark Fibre
Rukwa Valley, Tanganyika Territory



Chief Kiwanga's Village on the Momba River



Crossing the Momba

dwelling in a forest clearing. A diet of boiled rice is unsatisfying after many days to men with healthy appetites, and we hurried towards that habitation with visions of bacon and eggs, bread, and vegetables floating before our eyes. We wondered what manner of folk had selected that isolated spot for a home, but, it must be confessed, the inhabitants occupied a less prominent place in our thoughts than the bread and bacon. The place proved to be the Shangani Mission, in charge of Mr. W. Anderson, of the London Missionary Society who, with his wife and four children—two girls and two boys, whose ages ranged from 5 to 9 years—had been working among the Shangani Matabele for several years. They welcomed us warmly and pressed us to stay the remainder of the day and the night with them.

We were anxious to hurry on, but the temptation to enjoy a pleasant halt proved too great, and we agreed. After a bath we sat down to a meal of fried eggs, bread and tea, and **HOT SCONES!** To us it was a banquet, for we were starving for good food. Never in our lives, before we started tramping across Africa, had we been really hungry for any long period. During that long journey we were hungry every day. With the exception of brief periods when we were suffering from malaria, we were hungry for 15½ months! We looked forward to a meal with unholy relish, and when we were called to dinner at the close of that day at the mission, we responded with alacrity.

It is a saying in Africa that it is always the unexpected that happens there. Perhaps the statement is as true of any other country. Be that as it may, it was the unexpected that happened that night. There was our dinner before us, steaming hot. We were in our chairs ready to set to, but that dinner was never eaten. My diary testifies to the fact that the events which followed rapidly on the call to dine were not to be anticipated. Under that day's date appears the entry. . . .

"Dinner that night was another joy, and we retired early, well content with our lot". I had rounded off an account of the day's doing by setting down our intentions. I was sadly astray. We did not turn in until the early hours of the following morning, and our hearts then were filled with dread.

We were delaying our inroads into the viands until the children were seated, but when Mrs. Anderson called to them, they did not answer. They had been playing with their pet monkey near the house during the afternoon, and it was thought that they were close at hand, but when repeated shouts met with no response, and we made a search there was no sign of monkey or children. It was then dusk and knowing that they would not willingly remain out in the forest until that hour their parents were gravely concerned. Even missionaries' children sometimes disobey their elders and two of the children had been punished on previous occasions for playing in the Shangani when the water was low. A "boy" was questioned. He had not seen the children. Had he been down to the river? He had. The Shangani, he said, had come down in full flood that very afternoon. Grim tidings!

It was no use searching the river. If the little party had been caught by the waters their bodies would be washed miles away long since. The only hope was that they had crossed to the other bank before the flood came down, and been cut off when they wished to return—that, or the dread alternative that they were lost out in a wild forest, that extended for hundreds of miles in every direction.

The Matabele have a system of signalling over great distances by calling to each other, the cry being taken up and passed from kraal to kraal. Soon the eerie-sounding calls were passing back and forth into the night. Questions were shouted out into the darkness, kraal after kraal took them up, until the cries died away into the distance. Answers came back, growing louder and stronger as the thoroughly alarmed natives

near the mission picked them up. The children had not been seen beyond the river.

Leaving instructions with the "boys" to have a bonfire lighted near the mission, and the church bell tolled, we took our torches and automatics, and in company with Mr. Anderson, set out to search the forest, leaving an almost distracted mother to wait, and hope. We knew that our chances of finding them in that wide forest were remote. First we searched around the nearest vleis, and at length picked up the children's tracks near one of them, but our torch was almost useless in the blackness, and we could not trace whither they led. Almost fearing to look, we cast the weak beam over the surface of the cold, muddy pools, but saw nothing. Coo-eeing at intervals, we struck out into the depths of the forest, but the answering cries we strained to hear did not come. By 10 p.m. we were forced to realise the hopelessness of our quest. In falling rain we returned to the mission, and reached it as a thunderstorm broke. Thunder rolled and crashed, rain descended in torrents, and vivid lightning flashes lit gloomy heavens, and illumined for an instant the nearer forest trees. It seemed a terrible thing to leave four infants out in that wild storm. Slipping on our waterproofs we again set out, heading for a native village about a mile off. There we roused the sympathetic natives, and told them to assemble at the mission at daybreak and bring their tom-toms. Some were told off to call in the men from neighbouring kraals and an extensive search was organised for the morrow. The children were known and loved by all the natives, and loud was the sobbing and the wailing of the women, when they learned that they had not been found. The men talked the matter over among themselves in hushed tones and as each dread possibility was mentioned by one or other of them, ejaculations of pity burst from their lips. Their gloomy talks were punctuated by a series of mournful "O! O! Ows!" that expressed a wealth of feeling. We made

our way home at length, and turned in before morning, but not to sleep. It was a night of sorrow for us all. For the distracted parents, it was almost unbearable, but their Christian fortitude aided them considerably in the long hours before the dawn.

With the first light of the day we were up organising the search, and when the various parties had gone out, Jim and I half-waded, half-swam to the other bank of the racing Shangani, and travelled far, rousing the kraals on that side. Everywhere the natives willingly joined in the search, and all showed signs of their deep emotion at the happening. We could not help thinking how different must have been the emotions of the fathers of those people—even some of the elders themselves—when last they were roused to join in a combined action. Then, so one who had witnessed some of the horrors of the Matabele revolt had told us, babies were tossed from spear to spear before their mothers' eyes. So great a change has law and order and missionary influence wrought upon the native mind.

At 8 a.m. we reached a kraal where a woman told us she had heard two shots fired. We had not heard them, but we returned at once on our tracks, for two rifle shots had been fixed upon as the signal to recall the searchers. At the mission we met an overjoyed mother endeavouring to embrace four travel-stained children at one moment. The monkey was performing an amazing series of rapid back-somersaults in the confined space of his cage, chattering shrilly the while. It was a joyful moment.

A native had found the party heading in the direction of home. They were very wet, very tired and very frightened, but the younger boy had kept his head during the night, when he realised they were lost, and made the others lie down with him under a tree. They had not slept much, but when the sun rose, the elder lad, who possessed a sense of direction, took charge and guided the others towards the mission, getting

his bearings from the sun—that despite his nine years.

They were put to bed and were little the worse for their night out in a storm in the wildest part of Southern Rhodesia.

The day after leaving the mission, we got within shooting distance of a herd of impala, a species of antelope which is very good to eat, and I bagged my first head of game. It was a proud moment. We left Ndalamané to skin it and bring on some of the meat, but though we made camp a few miles on, our "boss-boy" did not turn up that night, and it was late the following morning before he arrived—without any of the meat. He told a story of having been driven away from the carcass by the arrival of several huge hyenas that forced him to spend the night in a tree, while they ate the kill. He swore that he had not had any of the meat, and we had to accept his word, though our suspicions were very strong. Ploughing through a wilderness of sticky mud that day, we sighted the police officer from Inyati coming towards us. In the distance we could see his Ford car being towed out of a river by a team of straining donkeys. He told us that he had been out investigating the death of Jakalasa, Lobengula's son. He was satisfied the fellow had been poisoned, so there was perhaps some reason for the action the dead man's brother had taken to punish the supposed dealers in black magic. The officer said that he and the doctor accompanying him had had an extremely rough time of it during the journey to and from Jakalasa's village, as all the rivers were in flood, and the ground a vast bog for many miles. He had been obliged to convert his car into a donkey carriage.

We were shortly to have troubles of our own. We reached the ford across the Shangani, for which Ndalamané had been heading, and managed to wade across in water to our waists, trusting to Providence to guard us from the crocodiles which infest all the rivers thereabouts. Then began a race to the Gwelo

which natives reported was rising rapidly. When we reached it we found it a muddy, swirling torrent, 60 yards wide and very deep. Natives waiting on the far bank to cross shouted that there was no way over until the water subsided somewhat, an event which they anticipated would occur in a few days' time. Like all intermittent rivers, the Rhodesian streams rise and fall very rapidly. We set up our tent about 20 paces from the river's edge and settled down to wait, as there was no timber near, suitable for making a raft with the few implements we had at hand.

We were lying on our beds of leaves gazing out at the majestic sunset over the river, when a native who had been reclining by the water's edge, became suddenly wildly excited. Jumping to his feet he commenced pointing towards our tent, jabbering rapidly about "Skellums" ("Skellum" in the kaffir dialect means any dangerous animal, man included.) It was our turn to leap to activity. We sprang up, and found that the excited one's attention had turned towards the river a little above our tent. We were just in time to see some bulky object disappearing beneath the surface in a swirl of waters. The boy who had given the alarm said that a huge crocodile had stolen up from the river, passed behind our tent, and seizing a small calf, that had been feeding with some cattle not ten yards from the tent, had dragged it into the river. It sounded a little improbable, but we investigated, and sure enough there was the clear spoor of a crocodile leading up from the river, at the point the boy indicated, and passing round behind the tent. There were also drag marks leading back to the water. The marvel was that it had all happened so swiftly and silently almost under our noses, and we had only been in time to see the final scene. We thanked our lucky stars that a calf had been conveniently close to us. Those Gwelo crocodiles are exceptionally venturesome brutes, and quite partial to a white man, be he only rice-fed.

The river having risen still higher next day, we

strolled over to a neighbouring village to trade our salt for eggs, mealies and a chicken. As in every native village, the piccanins greatly outnumbered the adults, not remarkable when it is remembered that each male has anything from one to four wives. We were highly diverted by the spectacle of about 20 of the ebony-hued toddlers, naked save for strings of brightly-coloured beads about their waists, waddling about the village with their abnormally rotund tummies stuck out like a pouter-pigeon's crop, engrossed in a game of "follow the leader". They are for the most part happy souls. They do not cry much, though they come in for as many, or more, spankings, as white imps. They are extraordinarily hardy—indeed only the hardiest survive their early infancy in a native kraal, for their upbringing is none too careful. In their very early years they are put on a diet that would produce convulsions in any white child and kill it within a week. Lumps of mealie-dough are thrust into their mouths, and, if they survive, they wax fat on the fare.

By the following afternoon the river had dropped sufficiently for us to attempt a passage. It was a ticklish job fighting our way across the current, with the water up to our armpits and occasionally swirling over our shoulders. Jim and I assisted in carrying our baggage over, holding our burdens on our heads with one hand, and carrying our cocked rifles in the other, ready to fire in an attempt to scare off any crocodile that showed itself. We felt much more comfortable when we had clambered up the opposite bank.

Beyond the Gwelo the forest was denser and darker, and the foliage of the great trees meeting overhead formed mighty arches, that at times shut out the sky. At the end of the day we crossed the river, we found ourselves without water. The rain had ceased, and, contrary to expectations, we came upon no streams. As the night was warm we decided to keep going in the hope of reaching a native village before long. That night walk through the dark and silent forest was

a sheer delight. The memory of it will remain long with us, though no striking incident occurred to fix it in our minds. It was just the beauty of it all. There was no moon, but the native track we followed was well-worn and free of obstacles. At intervals a velvet-black sky showed forth, glowing golden at a million points with myriads of clear shining stars. Through the trees fireflies glided swiftly—thousands of dancing fireflies, their blue phosphorescence giving the impression of lanterns carried by a silent, hurrying host of forest dwellers. A soft warm breeze stirred the forest branches, hyenas howled in the distance, but their eerie cries came from too far off to dispel the great silence of the forest depths. Silently we wound through the trees, as pilgrims passing through some vast cathedral—for the forest is indeed Nature's great cathedral.

Presently we reached a stout stockade of saplings, through which we passed by a narrow V-shaped gateway, and found ourselves in a compact native village strongly defended against animal and human marauders by a high surrounding stockade. A native, at a call from Ndalamané, had removed several great beams from the gateway to permit our entry, and he paused to replace them before leading us to the Induna. The old fellow was lying in his hut, too weak and ill to come and greet us. He asked us to enter, and we crawled on our hands and knees into the dark, bare little structure. The Induna was lying unclothed under a flimsy rug before a smoky fire. He greeted us impressively, but in a low and quavering voice, for he was very ill indeed. We doctored him with quinine and aspirin, and were preparing to depart when a dusky figure slipped past us, and greeted the old chap with a great show of feeling. It was Ndalamané, and the rogue told us then, for the first time, that the Induna was his father. We remembered then that it was Ndalamané who had first suggested that we make the night walk. He had not said anything about his father in case we should become suspicious that he

intended leading us from our route, so that he might visit his relatives. Knowing him, we probably would have suspected him of some such intention. A native, if given an opportunity, will frequently lead an unsuspecting traveller to a supposedly ideal camping ground that turns out to be a filthy village—ideal only in the mind of the guide who, mayhap, has a wife in one of the kraals. However, that particular village was not off our path, and was quite a clean one. Moreover, Ndalamane's display of filial affection was commendable—and being just masters, we had long been seeking something commendable in our sinful servant.

In a tree-sheltered clearing we pitched our tent between the goat-pen and the cattle kraal. It was an odorous spot, but not unpleasantly so. All about us fires burned into the darkness, casting a ruddy glow on to the shining black skins of natives eating their suppers of mealie-pap around them. A low murmur of voices punctuated by the peculiar lip, tongue and teeth clicks of the Matabele language, filled the air, for natives are great gossips, and the supper hour is an occasion for much interchange of small talk. Occasionally a girl laughed, or giggled flirtatiously, have it as you will. Our "boys" were not beauties, but two of them were strangers—and strangers come rarely to those isolated villages.

As we sat around our fire eating our supper, two natives came silently out of the darkness, saluted us with a muttered "Inkoos!", and laid two shallow baskets containing mealie-meal and kaffir oranges before us. Later another brought us a bowl of goats' milk—presents from a grateful Induna. Kaffir oranges were new to us. Their external appearance is identical with that of an orange, and at first glance it would be difficult to distinguish between them. The resemblance ends there. Their skin is really a hard shell, and when it is broken open a brownish-yellow pulpy fruit is revealed, clinging to large stones. They are delicious-

tasting, and rich in juice. We blessed their existence on many a dry hot afternoon.

Despite his weakness, the old Induna accompanied us beyond the confines of his village when we took the trail again, shortly after dawn the following day. Matabele custom forbids that the departing guest shall go his way without the head-man of the village being there to bid him "Humber Guhlé!" ("May your journey be pleasant!") When we looked back before the forest trees shut him from sight the noble old fellow was standing in the wet grass, his arm outstretched in a farewell gesture, calling on his rapidly dwindling strength, that he might maintain an upright bearing for so long as he was in view. A pathetic, yet courageous, figure.

It was just on dark at the end of the day we crossed the Kano river and entered the Sebungwe reserve, the second of the great reserves we were to traverse, that we met Sweetman. We had pitched our tent up among the trees above a grass-grown vlei to be away from the mosquitoes, and had just got our camp fire going, when we heard a low murmur of voices speaking in a native dialect, approaching down the vlei. Through the gloom, invested at that hour with a peculiar luminous beauty by the presence of the fireflies, we made out an ox-drawn sledge, surrounded by a small band of dark figures, advancing slowly through the grass. They halted and one of the figures made his way up the slope to our camp fire. To our surprise we saw he was a white man. Greetings exchanged, he introduced himself as one, Sweetman, who had come to that part of the world sixteen years before, and had taken up his abode with the natives. He had a couple of native wives, and now never forsook the haunts of the tribe, in which he was a kind of chief, for civilisation. He spoke with a cultured voice, but he did not volunteer his early history, and we did not ask it. One does not ask too many questions of the people met off the byways in Central Africa. He was an

ivory poacher, spoke a dozen native dialects, lived on native foods, smoked the vile native tobacco, yet somehow managed to keep himself above the people with whom he had cast his lot.

He was as surprised to see us as we were to see him. The last white man he had encountered passing our way, he told us, was a fellow fleeing from the law. That unfortunate fugitive had come through a year before, carrying absolutely nothing, and subsisting entirely on the hospitality of the natives. He had reached the Commissioner's post at Gokwe, and gone on again, refusing all aid. Seventy-five miles on, at a trading store run by a man named McKenzie, the only white man living between Gokwe and the Zambesi, he had contracted malaria. Refusing to return to civilisation, he had pushed on to the river, only to die a wretched death of dysentery in a native kraal on its banks shortly after his arrival. It was a poignant little tale, the more impressive for being told out there in that wild spot, by that strange exile. Sweetman having told it, chatted a while longer, drained a mug of tea, and returned to his sledge. The night soon swallowed him up.

Climbing out of the Lutope River valley the next day we came upon one of those scenic gems which nature secretes here and there in the depths of her remotest wilds. We had risen before the dawn, and the morning was still early when our *ulendo* threading its way through the silent, dew-washed forest, surmounted a ridge, and descended into a broad, green valley through which a hurrying river bubbled along, between banks of grassy lawn, to join its parent stream, the still distant Zambesi. A dull booming filled the air, and when we had breakfasted on mealie pap, washed down with "billy" tea, we followed the stream down to investigate. We had not gone far before the stream disappeared into a deep forest glade. The booming had changed to a roar, and misty clouds of finest spray rose up before us, to

descend in light rain showers, that the morning sunlight caught and changed to rainbow dust that filtered down through gleaming, dripping leaves. Entering the glade we saw a bushland wonder, the beauty of which haunted us both long afterwards, and which persists in memory still, though the vision of the greater majesty of the Victoria Falls comes between. Suddenly leaving its narrow bed, the river widened out, foamed around and over great boulders littering its course, and plunged in a rush of riotous waters over a horseshoe shaped pool, sixty feet sheer below. There it boiled madly, and then shot out through a narrow-necked gorge to race away once more through the lower forest levels. Three great cataracts take the leap together in that miniature Niagara, to unite in one thundering, spouting cascade, that churns to fury the caught-up waters in the seething boiling-pot below. Seen by few, unsung by any, the Umbumbuzi Falls have a charm and a beauty as deep as their isolation.

It was but a day's march from the Umbumbuzi to Gokwe—a collection of thatch-roofed dwellings in the heart of the “never-never”.

Mr. L. Stap, the Commissioner in charge of the post, his wife, and his Assistant Commissioner must have found it hard to believe their eyes when we threaded our way up the slope to their residence. It was the first time they had seen such a party as ours, and when they learned we were heading for Kafue, in Northern Rhodesia, a further 260 miles on, through uninhabited, tsetse-infested forest, they asked us the whereabouts of our *ulendo*. People travelling about Central Africa normally have a *ulendo* or *safari* of from 50 to 150 porters. When we explained that the three miserable-looking porters we had with us made up our *safari*, they at first refused to believe us. They wanted to know how we were going to carry our tent, camping equipment and food. We told them one “boy” was carrying the food for himself and the other two, and the others were carrying our food, silk tent and all

the camp gear we possessed. We added that in the Australian bush, people did not travel with a small army. They laughed then, and realising that as we had come so far safely, there was quite a chance that we would get past the Zambesi. They agreed to obtain fresh "boys" to replace our porters. Those worthies complained that we walked too far and too fast each day, and had crippled them. We paid them off, added a *bonsella* (gratuity), and gave them sufficient meal for the return journey. So we parted with our first *safari*.

Then we answered a call for lunch. Game is scarce in tsetse fly areas, but that day we tasted real meat— young duiker, well roasted. It was delicious. There was wheaten bread, too. How we ate!

The following day a band of native police boys went out into the forest, and later returned with four recruits, who were to replace our three Inyati carriers. There was the youthful M'Tanganyika, of the Mishankwe tribe, whom we made our capita, or head "boy"; Songamakonda, a bearded, wiry-looking stalwart of the Mlogwi branch of the Matabele; Sapaladza, of the many ear ornaments, who owned allegiance to the Mlengwe people, and the weak-looking Makalanga (which means "Dog"), a miserable specimen of the Mtouka tribe. For a shilling a day each, they agreed to carry our "imposhla" (goods) as far as the Zambezi. Taking enough meal and rice to last us the 260 mile journey to Kafue, we said goodbye to our Gokwe friends, and started.

Every African tribe has its "taboos"—animals or fish they will not eat. Some hold curious beliefs concerning certain beasts of prey, and will not kill them under any circumstances. Two of our boys believed, in common with their fellow tribesman, that lions are merely wicked brothers and sisters of theirs, who have been changed in form. Some natives will swear they have seen the transformation taking place. Be that as it may, our two brothers of lions, so they said, did not

fear "Simba" (the lion), but they had an unholy fear of the hyena, and justly so, for the sneaking brutes have a more powerful jaw than any other animal, and in certain districts they prey greatly on the natives, creeping up on them whilst sleeping, and tearing away their faces with a single snap of their slobbering fangs. Particularly evil is the reputation of the Zambesi hyena for that type of attack.

Each night while we were in that country, the disgusting brutes ringed our camp fires round, making night hideous with their eerie, blood-curdling hoots (the laugh of a hyena is reputed to be merely a sex-call, at any rate it is a cry far less seldom heard than the familiar hoot that rises to a high-pitched wail). To keep them at a safe distance the boys adopted the expedient of firing the forest trees in a wide circle beyond the ring of our camp fires, but one night, after a particularly arduous day, the fellows were wearied out, and contented themselves with lighting a single fire. The hyenas were not so venturesome at that particular spot and though they sneaked about us all night, they kept a respectful distance. Towards morning we discovered why.

About 4 a.m. we both awakened suddenly, and sat up on our bed of leaves, to see the dark form of Sapaladza, one of the boys who claimed blood relationship with the lions, sliding in through our tent opening. We fancied we heard his teeth rattling, but that may only have been imagination. He managed to stutter in a scared, hushed whisper, "O Bwana, Simba, Simba!" ("Oh, master, a lion, a lion!") and at the same instant a terrific, coughing roar shattered the silence. The boy who was unafraid of lions came further into the tent at one bound!

A second deep-throated roar set the air trembling, dying away into a series of mighty coughs. It was the challenge of the wilds, the King of the Jungle's magnificent defiance of all living things that inhabit his domain. As the Kiswahili speaking natives of Africa interpret it:

"Ngia hi" ("This Domain"):—A low growl.
"Yonani?" ("Whose is it?"):—A roar.
"Yonani?" ("Whose is it?"):—An air shaking roar.
"Yango!" ("Mine!"):—A mighty cough.
"Yango!" ("Mine!"):—A lower pitched cough.
"Yango!" ("Mine!"):—A cough, dying away to silence.

The second roar had roused the other boys, and they too, came crowding around the tent-opening. Hastily slipping on our field boots, and grabbing up our rifles, we hurried out, to find that the camp fire had died down and allowed a lion to approach within 30 yards of the tent. As we made towards him he emitted another terrific roar, and then, as the weak beam from our almost useless electric torch fell on him, he turned and trotted into a deep thicket. We followed, with the still-quaking boy, who had given the warning, close on our heels, but Simba eluded us in the darkness of the dense undergrowth. We returned to camp, to the evident relief of our follower. The fellow's courage had not quite deserted him, but we never again heard him boast of his relationship to the great cats.

Insect pests troubled us greatly as we penetrated the jungle forests of the Zambesi country. By day, tsetse flies and midges tortured us, and mosquitoes made our nights a misery. There are over a score of varieties of the tsetse fly and most are potential carriers of the germs of the fatal sleeping-sickness which devastates huge areas of the African Continent. They vary in size from that of a small house fly to the proportions of a gnat, and no more vicious and persistent attackers torment the traveller in the African wilds. In buzzing swarms they descend on the hapless victims of their attacks, stinging the hands, necks, knees and other exposed parts, and even stabbing through stout khaki shirts and cotton singlets. At every onslaught they draw blood, and they will return again and again to their task of torment, even after being struck a blow sufficient to destroy an

ordinary fly. We had perforce to endure them, hoping that they carried none of the terrible sleeping-sickness. Midges caused us no concern, beyond the smarting and itching they set up on our exposed flesh, but we were perturbed by the appearance of ever-increasing numbers of the malaria-carrying anopheles mosquitoes among the buzzing, stinging hordes that plagued us from dusk 'til dawn. We felt that sooner or later we would go down to an attack of malaria and the thought of having to suffer its ravages in that remote jungle disquieted us not a little, especially when we considered the meagreness of our food supplies. Later we endured it in parts far less hospitable—in the wastes of the swamps of the Southern Sudan, and in the trackless Northern deserts—and thought less fearfully of it, but we were both a year older then.

Despite our woes, the days held much of interest for us. Fresh lion and leopard tracks were frequently sighted, and we had high hopes of getting a shot at some of the beasts before we left that part of the country. Baboons and monkeys, ever curious of the disturbers of their solitude, became familiar sights, and entertained us vastly with their acrobatic feats among the branches, and intertwined jungle creepers. Wild pigs we sighted frequently, and ducks and wild geese were plentiful. A change was noticeable in the types of native villages encountered. In place of the collection of beehive-shaped thatch huts, we saw more and more rudely constructed huts, built at the top of frameworks of tall poles, as a protection against nocturnal prowlers of the forest. The native villagers, too, were a vastly different type from those met with further south. They were duller, poorer folk, owning no cattle—this because of the presence of the tsetse fly which exterminates most animals—and naked, except for a cloth swathed about their waists. Whenever we passed they instantly squatted down on their haunches, clapped their hands resoundingly, and murmured "Inkoos! Inkoos!" in respectful greeting, but they rarely came to us voluntarily.



Letter Carrier and Escort



A Rock split by a Tree near the Top of Kilimanjaro (the
Author is standing below)



A Banana Market near Marangu Mission



A Native Mountain Home Kilimanjaro

At that stage we had crossed most of the Zambesi's southern tributaries, and were almost solely dependent on jungle pools for our drinking water. Most of those pools were pans of black ooze, in many of which wild pigs and other animals had wallowed, but one soon learns that it is impossible to be fastidious on trek.

We had an unexpected encounter with a lone white man some miles south of the Zambesi. It was a few days before Christmas. Our thoughts were with distant friends, but we felt that the haunts of our kind were very, very far away. Then towards noon we came along a forest track on to a tropical garden. Bananas, pineapples, paw-paws and guavas were growing there in profusion, but there was an orderly arrangement about that plantation that suggested a supervision of an owner who was not a native. A Zambesi Batonka never planted like that.

Looking around, we caught sight of a collection of mud-walled, thatch-roofed huts, larger than any native dwellings we had seen—a European's home, obviously, picturesquely situated at the top of a palm-crowned hill. Wondering what type of man it was who had selected that lonely spot for a home, we made our way up a narrow track to the largest of the buildings, a long, white-washed bungalow. A middle-aged, clean-shaven man, clad in khaki "slacks" and open-necked shirt, came out to greet us. He proved to be McKenzie, the trader, of whom our friend Sweetman, the ivory-poacher of the Lutope, had spoken some weeks previously. That he was a gentleman by birth was clear. He had been a British army captain during the war, but had been in Africa before the call to arms had reached him, and he had returned to the land of his adoption as soon as hostilities were over. For the past seven years he had lived cut off from civilisation at that isolated little trading post, exchanging beads, salt and trinkets with the natives for "Inyorka" tobacco, a commodity much prized by the more civilised natives of Mashonaland, who paid well for it. He was amazed to see us. Some-

times, when the rivers were passable, he journeyed as far south as Gokwe post, but he had seen no white men for six months, and never before had he entertained two Europeans at his store. We remarked on the beauty of the spot, for his home is set amidst dense vegetation, in the cool shades of which springs of fresh water run all the year round.

He laughed and said he had called the place "Eden".

"And what about Eve?" we inquired.

"Oh, my wife? I don't introduce her!" he replied. We wondered at that, but as he was leading us to his living quarters she came by. She was dressed in gaily coloured cloths, but was barefooted. Her carriage was regal and her features were not unpleasant, but her hue was ebony black. She favoured us with a flash of gleaming white teeth as she passed.

Over a bowl of kaffir beer he told us she was a Mashona. He had married her according to native rites, for natives were strict in those matters. He had paid "lobolo" (marriage portion) to her parents. One cow had been her price, and she had mothered his children well enough ever since.

He broke the silence that followed, by assuring us that we would get used to the idea of white men taking black wives to themselves. For his part he was not going back to civilisation, and even exiles needed company of some sort. He treated his "wife" as an inferior, and took his meals alone generally, although sometimes his children joined him. There were three of them, the eldest about five years of age. He had undertaken their education, but his hope was that when they were old enough to marry they would mate with their kind.

McKenzie was a delightful host, and we stayed a day and a half with him. He wanted us to remain until Christmas, but we had to push on. Leaving him in his isolated Eden, we followed all that day and half the next in the wake of a great elephant herd that had flattened the jungle for a width of over a chain, along a trail 35 miles long, pushing down every tree and shrub

in their path, and wrecking the stockades of many a native village, until their track swung away to the north-west, and we left it.

Rising out of the purple morning mists one day, we saw the peaks of a wild jumble of forested hills before us. Few white men had traversed that region, and we knew that when we came on the Zambesi we would have to rely on native dug-outs to transport us across into Northern Rhodesia.

All one morning we climbed the foothills of the mountains, and towards mid-day descended into a vast amphitheatre in the hills, and passed through a large native village. It was evident that white faces were strange to the inhabitants. All left their work in the fields, and ran to greet us, clapping their hands in the usual manner. As we came close to the kraals, the women set up a high-pitched, wailing cry, produced by opening the mouth and wiggling the tongue with remarkable rapidity. It is the mode of greeting, employed by women of the Batonka tribe, when men of substance pass by. We knew we were sailing under false colours, but the louder they wailed the more we encouraged them. Taking their cue from the chief, the headmen ran up and down among the kraals, urging the women on to further efforts. They rose to the occasion with a will, and the valley rang with their cries.

We would have proceeded past the village a little further to take our morning meal, but the Induna implored us to tarry a while with an earnestness that would have been highly gratifying, had we not scented that he had taken one jar too many of the wine of the country. He managed to tell us that a lion or leopard had caused a commotion in the village, just before our arrival, by coming down out of the hills and seizing a goat. He made us understand that he wanted us to hunt it, so nothing loth, we followed him and several others of the tribe, to the spot where the goat had nibbled its last blade of grass. The undergrowth was very thick in the

vicinity and spoor was hard to find, added to which the natives did not appear over-keen to go a hunting. The kaffir beer was having its effects.

After casting around for a while, without success, the natives gave up the hunt and we did likewise.

As soon as the boys had finished their mealie meal, they disappeared in the direction of the kraals, and it was evident when we collected them a couple of hours later, that they had passed a pleasant time over the beer pot. It is extraordinary the quantity of kaffir beer the natives can drink, and still manage to keep on their feet, for all that our men swayed unsteadily as they toiled with their loads up the steep and winding path that day. Deeper and deeper we wound into the mountains, and then one morning away to the east, at the base of the most distant hill, we saw a faint silver gleam shining through the emerald of the trees—the mighty Zambesi, and the border of Northern Rhodesia, at last. A little later we crossed an open stretch of park land and saw the broad bosom of the great river before us. For three miles we followed it, until we reached Chief Mola's village. There we decided to stop, having been advised by our boys that Mola had dug-out canoes at his disposal. We erected our tent a little back from the river bank, and in full view of the oily waters. It was Christmas Day, and our dinner, consisting of a mug of tea, three hard boiled eggs, a plate of boiled rice, and one mango tasted the better, we fancied, for being eaten at that season. To the river then to drink to the health of loved ones far away in good Zambesi water and later to bathe in the "flowing bowl", despite the crocodiles. That night the mosquitoes came forth in numbers such as we had never known before. Had we but known it, the torment we endured that night was to have a more lasting effect than we reckoned upon. That Christmas night we received our first malarial infection. We were to suffer for it later on.

Next day we made the crossing in two dugouts

provided by Mola, who accompanied us to the first village on the Northern Rhodesian side, and assisted us to engage porters for the next stage to Kafue. We were at the limits of the country of the Sentebele speaking people, and had to rely on Mola to do our translating, and to give instructions to the fresh porters we engaged. Barring a few phrases we would not be able to make them understand anything, once our journey from their village had commenced. Our first day's trek in Northern Rhodesia was an unhappy experience. Rain commenced falling before we had gone a mile, and continued all day, as we passed into a further range of mountains. At night, wet, cold and not over-cheerful, we arrived at a little village set amidst a grove of palms. An old Induna met us, and conducted us to a large granary, supported on poles, beneath which he indicated we might pass the night. He then brought us a chicken, some mealie meal and a dozen eggs, for our own food supplies were running very short. We gave the boys the chicken to kill and clean, endeavouring to make them understand that they were to prepare it for our supper. Too late we learned that they had misunderstood and popped it into their own cooking pot. The mealie meal was full of weevils, so we overlooked the robbery of our chicken, and gave that, too, to the boys. Our Boxing Night supper was dwindling rapidly—and we were starving. We still had our eggs, however. We boiled them. It has been said that a man who cannot eat a bad egg is not really hungry. Perhaps we were not hungry that night—that is not really hungry. We contented ourselves with small rations of boiled rice. The fire we had lighted smoked a good deal, for everything was sodden with rain, but we reckoned that the smoke would drive away the mosquitoes, so endured smarting eyes uncomplainingly. At least, we expected our clothes would be dry in the morning, for we had strung them on a line over the fire. On awakening next morning I discovered my wristlet watch was missing, and remembered that I

had put it in my breeches pocket. A search revealed it was no longer there. Raking around the embers of the fire, I found the charred remains of what had once been a jolly good watch. After the incident of the chicken, the mealie meal and the eggs, I should have suspected that fire. Everything else went wrong. I had hung my trousers directly over the centre of it. What might have happened had the line broken, I hesitated to conjecture. Civilisation was then not so very far away. One has to be very careful when travelling in the wilds.

Through beautiful mountain scenery, by many a forest pool and rushing stream we passed, and on December 30th we reached Kafue. Crossing the river of that name by the railway bridge, we were in civilisation again after a 420 miles trek through some of the most isolated country in all Africa. We had enjoyed our *safari* experiences immensely, but we were pining for one good meal and a sleep in a real bed, so it was with light hearts that we saw the sign "Royal Hotel" before us as we entered the township. There we enjoyed the benefit of warm water, changed and waited for that most pleasant of all sounds—the jangling of the dinner gong. It sounded at length. How we ate that evening. We fully expected that when we rose from the table the few remaining diners in the room would stand as one man and applaud our efforts, but they forbore.

Before we sampled the delights of our beds that night we sat out under the stars for an hour and watched the wonders of an electrical storm over the river. Making all manner of fiery patterns in the jet black heavens, now outlining the great cloud banks with an edging of flame, now rippling sheer across the sky, so rapidly the eye could scarcely follow, the lightning continued flashing without pause during the whole time we watched. It was as if some masterly manipulator of the celestial electricity were exercising all his art on that one magnificent display. There was no thunder audible. The

night was dark and silent, all sounds were hushed. It was as if all living things stood still to watch the wonders in the heavens.

As we dozed off to sleep the show must have ended, for, following a terrific thunder clap, the rain commenced pelting down. It was still thundering on the roof as we slipped into a dreamless sleep.

CHAPTER VII

RACING AGAINST TIME

THE PLAN—IN THE LION VAN—REVELRY AT LUSAKA—A TERRIBLE
NIGHT MARCH

IN THE course of our 7,600 miles tramp we had, for a variety of reasons frequently to cover great distances in a very short time, often under almost impossible conditions. One of the most arduous of all our rapid walks was that of the next 107 miles to Broken Hill, covered in $2\frac{1}{2}$ days in order to catch a train!

That race for the train was not made because we had abandoned our intention of walking the whole way, but with the idea of making an excursion southwards to visit the Victoria Falls, which we had missed when we crossed the Zambesi some hundreds of miles to the east, at Mola's village. The next train south was not due through Kafue until January 3rd. With Cairo, our ultimate goal, always calling us on, delays were ever irksome, and we planned that if we pushed north again on the day following our arrival at Kafue, we might possibly reach Broken Hill in bare time to catch the train at that township, and so be 107 miles further on our way when we returned to our point of departure, after our excursion to the finest of all the earth's scenic wonders. Had we known just how exacting that 107 miles dash was to prove, we would most probably have sat down at Kafue and waited for the train there. Even after 2,000 miles of footslogging over Africa, however, we were still impatient to be moving on.

We were up with the sun on that, the last day of the year, for we had much to do before starting off. We

had dismissed our Zambesi carriers, and intended carrying only our rifles, a little ammunition, and the barest necessities in the way of food, as far as Broken Hill. The remainder of our belongings we had to pack and send north by rail. We did not even carry a blanket, although the tropical rains were on us. It was close on noon before we got on our way. Our train was due out of Broken Hill at dawn on January 3rd. It was necessary for us to reach our goal, however, some time on January 2nd, as we were out of funds and had to get to the post office to collect money we had sent on ahead. Moreover, we would require a change of clothing, and that had to be obtained from our effects at the railway goods sheds before all the officials went off duty—and then there was our Christmas mail. We had had no letters since leaving Bulawayo. In order to be certain that all would be in readiness for us to catch that train, we would have to do the 107 miles in exactly two full days and four hours.

Stepping out at four miles an hour we headed for Lusaka, our first stopping point, 30 miles by rail from Broken Hill. Our first set-back was not long in coming. The keeper of a kaffir store set us on a track that, we learned before the day was over, took us six miles out of our way. We were following it when we reached a farm. The owners were absent but a Barotse "boy" on the place supplied us with a cup of tea, and told us we still had four hours fast walking (16 miles) to do to reach Lusaka—and we had already covered 20 miles!

Draining our teacups we gave the boy a *bonsella* (gratuity) of sixpence, and again asked how far it was to Lusaka.

"Oh, Babwana!" ("Masters!"), he replied, "it's too near."

That sounded more hopeful, but experience had taught us that a native will tell a white man just what he wants to hear—especially if previously rewarded with a *bonsella*. Our informant said his master had gone

by motor car to a New Year's Eve party to Lusaka, and added that if we followed the car tracks it would be a short cut.

Lusaka didn't prove "too near". It turned out to be too far. We followed those car tracks up hill and down dale, through wet grass and light forest, and at the end of 16 miles we were still following them. Just before pitch darkness came on we noticed that they had turned almost south, and our direction lay north! We struck a cleared road, and with the aid of our electric torch, followed the way the car had taken. At the end of half an hour's silent tramping we came on a signpost. Eagerly we scanned it—and found we were walking away from Lusaka. A joyous New Year's Eve! It was then nearly 9 p.m. We were about to retrace our steps, when we saw headlights approaching. A motor van came up, and we stopped it. It was the vehicle we had been following. It had turned off just near Lusaka and gone 11 miles south in order to pick up a party of revellers for the celebration at the Lusaka Hotel!

We had already done 36 miles to reach a place 30 miles from our starting point, and we considered we were not breaking our rule of "walking all the way" when we accepted the driver's offer of a lift back over the portion of the route we had come. It was a queerly assorted New Year's Eve party that rubbed shoulders in that van. There were we two Australians in our mud-stained khaki, armed to the teeth with rifles, automatics and knives, hungry and tired and yearning for a meal, a bath and a bed, and a happy band of Rhodesians in evening attire, on amusement bent. The van itself was an unusual conveyance. It was utilised mainly by the owner for transporting lion cubs, captured when their parents were shot—and it reeked with the odours of a zoo cage. I had my legs under a chair that seated a talkative Scot, who was garbed in faultless evening dress; our damp packs rested on the front seat of the van perilously close to a lady in a

dainty evening frock, and our rifles showed an uncontrollable tendency to get between the legs of the driver. So we bumped and jolted along through the night to Lusaka, a tiny township, since made the capital of Northern Rhodesia. Nearly an hour before we had been but a mile from it, had we but known.

Arrived at the little hotel, we found it packed with visitors, and our request for dinner and a bed met with the vaguest of responses from a one-eyed Scotchman who was installed behind the bar counter. Feeling far from disposed to adopt his suggestion that we wait until the proprietor had finished attending to his guests, we sought that worthy out and explained our humble needs. He did not appear over-enthusiastic. He thought we could get a meal without much difficulty, but said it would be utterly impossible to obtain a bed. It was not encouraging, but we made for the dining-room and did ample justice to the meal set before us. We were ravenous. The meal over, we again tried to make the proprietor see that we needs must sleep. Finally we were given beds in separate rooms, and I set it down against that publican that a bed in my room remained unoccupied all night.

We slept little that evening, for the sounds of revelry from the adjacent dining-room increased in volume as the night wore on, and as the glad New Year was ushered in, pandemonium was let loose.

Sleep was impossible. We greeted 1929 with sleepy grunts, and rolled out of bed with the dawn. Seventy-seven miles lay between us and Broken Hill—and we had a day and a half to do it in.

Lusaka was still slumbering after its exhausting New Year's Eve revels when we turned out at dawn. At that grey hour the task ahead of us appeared particularly dreary, and the 36 hours left us to cover the 77 miles to Broken Hill seemed far too few.

A cold shower brightened us both considerably, however, and when, after much delay, we succeeded in persuading the hotel "cook boy" to serve us with

a cup of coffee and a bite of bread, we felt quite optimistic about our chances of reaching our goal on time.

Shouldering our packs, and slinging our rifles, we were about to move off, when the "boy" came running towards us and demanded 5s. from each of us. As we had settled our accounts the night before, we gently refused. The "boy" insisted saying his master desired the payment for our "breakfast". We said, "Footsek"! which, in kitchen kaffir, means "Go away!" but is generally only addressed to dogs, and turned our heels on Lusaka.

Our way lay along the railway line, as there was no other track through the forest, and stony going it was. To increase our difficulties, the sharp stones tore our dilapidated boots badly, and the soles of mine parted from the uppers early in the march. At every step the flapping leather caught on the rough ground, causing me considerable annoyance, and, what was worse, slowing my pace greatly. I tied the soles on with rope, but it came off every ten yards or so, until I wearied of replacing it.

During the morning we reached Ngewerrere water tank, where one of the ugliest looking men I have ever seen refreshed us with whisky and milk—at least I had whisky in mine. Wilson doesn't touch it. Our friend had led a varied life, and had had many adventures in Africa. It was in the Congo that a violent individual had marred much of his beauty by biting off his nose. Still, even with the nose intact, it is doubtful whether he could have laid claims to beauty—even of a rugged type. Be that as it may, he was a good fellow, and his milk had the effect of lightening many of the miles that followed, for one of us at least. An hour after leaving him rain commenced falling in torrents. For mile after mile we tramped through it. The "waterproof" cloaks that draped our shoulders were long since perished by heat and moisture, and we were soon drenched to the skin. To keep up our

spirits we commenced to sing, but I am so dull a voice that I may not even sing in a bath, and Wilson implored me not to add to the horrors of the journey. I desisted. We left the railway after a while, as the permanent way was in a deplorable condition for walking, and took to the deep, wet grass beside the line.

At the end of 21 miles of thoroughly unpleasant walking, we reached a Dutch fettler's cottage, where we dried our clothes a little, and munched rock-like rusks while we made some repairs to our broken boots. On again, with the pangs of hunger commencing to trouble us acutely, we passed through flooded vleis (shallow-stream beds), and rain-soaked forest for a further 10 miles, until, just about dusk, we reached Chesamba, a small Northern Rhodesian township, consisting of a store, a railway office, the homes of a few railway officers, and a fettler's cottage. The inhabitants were not exactly hospitable, and the storekeeper had nothing edible for sale except biscuits and bully beef. Finally the fettler, another Dutchman, invited us to join him and his family at their humble table, and we made terrific inroads into a great junk of boiled meat set before us.

Tired as we were, we refused to be persuaded to stop the night, and once more headed off along the railway. The night was moonless, and we were unable to see the rails in the inky blackness. Of all the miles we had walked thus far, those stumbled over that night were the most arduous. There was no path alongside the permanent way, and we had to pick our route along the embankment, where loose piles of blue metal and large boulders littered the way. Our feet were bruised and aching and our boots were in tatters. At every step the track became worse, and walking was sheer torture. Once I stood on a rounded boulder, twisted my ankle, and pitched headlong over the embankment on to a pile of loose stones. My loaded rifle went flying into the darkness, but fortunately landed in soft

mud, and was undamaged. I was less fortunate. A stone had torn a hole in my boot, and blood was trickling from a raw patch of flesh on one foot. Added to that, the pain of my twisted ankle was agonising; and still we had those vile stones and the inky darkness to contend with. We left the railway after sticking it a while longer, and, pushing, through the dark forest, came, by great good fortune, on a track that appeared to lead in the correct direction. After following it for several miles, we decided to lie down and sleep for a few hours, until the moon came up. We were unable to start a fire, as all the wood we could gather was green and waterlogged. We were in the country of man-eating lions, but were beyond caring about them. Taking the sole precaution of winding the straps of our rifles about our wrists, we flung ourselves down on the wet ground, and tried to sleep. After an hour and a half, we gave the mosquitoes best, and dragged on once more, taking to the railway again, as we were not sure whither the path would lead.

Midnight, and we were still dragging our slow and painful way along that vile track. By 1.30 a.m. we had covered but 42 miles since starting at the previous dawn. The moon came up, but dense storm clouds obscured it, and the light it gave was little indeed. We reached M'Womboshi Siding and crawled in through the gate of the only habitation there—a ganger's cottage. A pack of yelping curs barked loudly in chorus as we entered, but they failed to rouse the ganger, whose snores rose above the frightful din. Unearthly as was the hour, we called through his bedroom window, but still the fellow slept on. We gave it up at length and throwing ourselves down on his verandah, endeavoured to forget our plight in sleep. Mosquitoes denied us that relief, and we were up again before daybreak. We made some noise walking on the verandah boards, and an aggrieved voice from the depths of the bedroom asked what we wanted. We replied that we wanted beds. The voice said there

were no beds, and couldn't we make less — row. We said . . . but what we said hardly matters. We went.

More of that torturing track. The eastern sky flushed softly pink, and day broke. Still we walked. At 7 a.m. we came to a railway cottage, where we breakfasted, what time a cheerful soul told us how malaria-ridden that part of the country was. A man who owed him a lot of money was dying of Blackwater fever a little further up the line. He hoped he wouldn't, as the blighter would thus dodge paying up. He was starting another anecdote relating to the horrible end of a young American geologist who had been mauled by a lion near Broken Hill a few days earlier, when we explained we still had 29 miles to cover in $7\frac{1}{2}$ hours in order to make our arrangements for catching our train at Broken Hill, and left him. If we were to arrive before the post office and the goods sheds closed at 4 p.m.—our original aim—we would have to walk four miles an hour, and keep it up without a halt for $7\frac{1}{2}$ hours. We could just do it, but only if the track improved. Summoning up fresh energy from somewhere, we re-started at our best pace.

The track did not improve. At 1 p.m. we reached the little siding called Nyama, and realised we were beaten. We still had 15 miles to go! But were we beaten? Our train back to the Falls was not timed to leave Broken Hill until 7.20 a.m. next day. We could still catch it, if we could get our money from the post office and our clothes from the goods sheds in time. We decided we could not let trifles of that nature defeat us at that stage. But we had to have the money at least, and those annoying offices closed at 4 p.m. At the Nyama siding was a young railway officer, with his wife and two young children. We learned from the husband that a train for Broken Hill would pass through Nyama at 3.15 p.m. arriving at Broken Hill at 4 p.m. We spun a coin and it fell to Jim to catch that train. He was to transact our business at

Broken Hill, return by a train that would arrive at Nyama at midnight, and we were then to continue our tramp together.

Jim acted according to plan. Exactly at midnight I was aroused from a deep sleep by a torch flashing into the room in which I lay. Outside it was pitch dark, and rain was coming down in torrents. It was a cheerless prospect, that 15 miles tramp through the mud, but, heavy-eyed as we both were through lack of sleep, we managed a grin of triumph. It looked as if we had won. Wilson had collected our cash, baggage, and letters, and everything was at a small hotel in Broken Hill awaiting us.

Letters from home! How the thought of them buoyed us up during that terrible night journey.

One mile slipped by. Only 14 miles more.

"What cheer, James, old man? Did you say 26 letters? . . ."

Thirteen miles to go—twelve—eleven. . . .

"Have those beds got sheets on 'em? . . ."

On through that seemingly endless night we dragged our aching feet. The rain pelted down, the going was even viler than before—but it was the last stage.

Nine miles, seven, six, five—a little over an hour more.

Jim also is limping now; my ankle is troubling me badly; mosquitoes are plaguing us unmercifully.

The lights of the Broken Hill lead and zinc mine come into sight.

Matches and cigarettes are sodden, and I am craving for a smoke.

Two miles—the station signal in sight—a train roars by—the mine is left behind—a mile more—the station! We are there!

We cross a slippery field, both fall in a muddy ditch crawl up the other side, and reach the hotel at last!

Twenty-six letters! Never mind bed now; it is already just on daybreak.



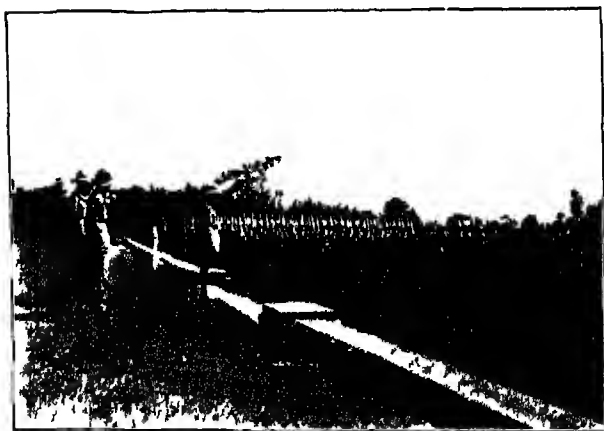
A last glimpse of Mt Kibo (left) and Mt. Muwensi (right).



The Customs Office at Longido Border Station.



Masai Maidens. Masai Reserve



King's African Rifles on Parade. Government House,
Nairobi.

“ . . . I wish I knew just how and where you are when you receive this. Will it be at the end of a long dusty, weary tramp . . . ? ” I wrung the water from my hair and fell asleep.

We learned at 6 a.m. that our train had been delayed eight hours by floods in the Congo, and was not then due until 3.30 p.m.!

CHAPTER VIII

NORTH FROM BROKEN HILL

THE RUN TO VICTORIA FALLS—MALARIA—NEW YEAR PARTY AT
KAPIRI M'POSHI—THE HUMOURIST—THE CONGO ENTERED—FRANCE
FOR POUNDS—CHEMIN DE FER DE KATANGA—BLACK WIVES—
ATTACKED BY A MAMBA—ELIZABETHVILLE

THE CONGO-RHODESIA mail arrived in due course and we boarded it for our first real holiday after 2,000 miles of tramping.

Much has been written of the wonders of Victoria Falls, and never yet has a writer been able to convey more than a suggestion of the grandeur of the awe-inspiring spectacle. All attempts to describe the Falls must be vain, for they defy description, if ever a spectacle did.

All too soon the day came round when we had to leave the enchanted spot. During the return journey we sank back in the comfortable cushions of the Rhodesia-Congo mail train, and gazed at two sets of deep tracks in the mud beside the railway line, pitying the poor devils who had made them less than a week before. Our holiday had made that nightmare march to Broken Hill appear an incident from a dark and dreary past. Our elation at knowing that that unhappy phase of our walk was ended was short-lived. The day we stepped off the train at Broken Hill, we both went down to a severe bout of tropical malaria which kept us tossing in our beds for ten days, more than semi-delirious half the time. Generous doses of quinine placed us on our feet finally, and on January 13th two extremely melancholy walkers set about their preparations for the march north into the Congo.

From Broken Hill we decided to walk along the railway route to Elizabethville, dispensing with porters and sending our baggage forward by train. Being extremely weak after our illness, we did not feel disposed to carry rifles, in addition to the remaining amount of kit we had set aside to take with us. We therefore engaged a piccanin of about 14 years to carry a portion of the gear.

We regained our strength rapidly, and on the second day out from Broken Hill we covered 29 miles, being agreeably surprised at the end of it to find that Kapiri M'Poshi, where we intended to stay the night, boasted an hotel. On entering the bar, we were delighted to find that we were to have some jovial company. Four young geologists, employed in looking for minerals in the wilds of Northern Rhodesia, by the Rhodesia-Congo Border Concessions Ltd., had journeyed in from their distant camps for a New Year re-union. There was M. Einar Berggren, a young Swede, recently arrived from the Luapula area, and J. C. Anderson, a Scot, who had been searching for mineral wealth out near the Portuguese West border, on the Upper Zambesi. From the upper reaches of the Kafue, two young Americans, Darnell, of New York, and Hay, of McGill University, had journeyed to foregather on that festive occasion. Our arrival increased the size of the party to six, and as all of us had been more or less isolated from our kind for some time we had much to talk about. Our friends had prepared for the occasion by ordering a turkey for dinner, with champagne as the beverage to accompany it. Mine host the Taverner provided other good things and we sat down to as excellent a meal as ever graced an hotel board. Tales of the remotest parts of Africa passed one of the pleasantest evenings of that long trek, and we turned in that night with a comfortable feeling that "Darkest Africa" had its compensations. There was one little insect in the ointment. At Broken Hill I had regretfully dispensed with the services of the much-worn and often mended boots that had carried me so

well over 2,100 miles of Africa, and replaced them with a new and heavier pair. That night I made the unhappy discovery that my right heel was badly rubbed and blistered. Experience had taught me that I was in for a few hundred miles of exceedingly uncomfortable walking, and remembering the sufferings we had both had further south, the prospect was not at all pleasant.

Strawberries, of all things, graced the table for breakfast next morning. Where they came from, only the hotel-keeper could tell, but we attacked them as only men who had not seen them for many months could, and asked no questions.

Our next encounter with white people took place one afternoon when the tropical rain was descending in a deluge. We were thoroughly saturated, and all about us the forest was water-logged. There appeared to be little prospect of our finding a comfortable resting-place for the night, especially as the district appeared to be unpopulated. We were rather surprised, therefore, as we followed the winding of the native path through the dripping trees, to see a young Afrikaner coming towards us, accompanied by a "boy" carrying his rifles. He explained to us that he and his wife were camped at the Kafulafuta River. He returned with us along the track, and presently we came on a canvas tent and three thatched rondavels. From one of them a young woman emerged, and she was introduced as our friend's wife. We learned that the existence they followed was rather unique. The husband did not like working continuously, and had so far managed to solve the problem of subsisting very comfortably for several months at a time, without toiling. His plan was to work on the railways for a few months, save a few hundred pounds, and then set up a camp in some place where game was plentiful. We noticed he had two fine rifles, a shot gun, lamps for night hunting, a plentiful supply of expensive foods, a gramophone and an up-to-date selection of records. He employed three native boys. He and his

wife and two baby children slept in the tent. One rondavel served as a cook house, another as a dining-room, and the third as the boys' quarters. To us, it appeared a novel way for a married man with a young family to live, but as they all appeared to be contented, we agreed there was something to be envied in it all. True the master of the household appeared to have the better of the bargain, as he lived only for his hunting, and he was thoroughly well equipped for that sport. He generally went out just before dusk and hunted through the night, not returning until the early hours of the morning. During that time his wife and babies were left alone, although it was a district in which man-eating lions prowled, three natives having been killed and eaten by them at a spot about a half a mile from the camp a few days before our arrival. Still his wife did not seem to mind except, as she informed us, when her husband left them alone for weeks on end while he went elephant hunting, leaving only a native behind to look after them.

At Bwana Mkubwa, eighteen miles from the border, we again heard of our friend Edward A. Cooke, at various townships passed on our journey, we had heard that a renowned motor cyclist named Edward Roberts had left Capetown on a motor cycle bound for Cairo, and had been making excellent progress. According to the South African papers, South Africa had made quite a fuss of the intrepid cyclist. Pressmen in Capetown and Johannesburg had interviewed him, and his photograph had appeared in several journals. We were astounded therefore to learn that the accomplished cyclist, on arriving at Bulawayo, had been arrested by the police, and deported for travelling on an altered passport. He was no other than friend Cooke—and his photograph had appeared in the same papers as had the pictures of Cooke, the trans-African walker. The same Pressmen had interviewed him in both capacities, and had failed to recognise him as the same person. Had he got past Bulawayo, he

doubtless would have fulfilled the promise he had made me so far away in the Transvaal, that he would one day rejoin me in the Congo. It was the last we heard of him.

The Belgian Congo was entered on the morning of January 25th, after 2,231 miles had been covered from Capetown. I had been on the track 139 days. Sakania was the point of entry, and having deposited our luggage at the tumble-down hotel the township boasts, we set forth to beard the lions of Belgian officialdom in their dens. First we invaded the domain of the Commissaire who spoke good English. He signed our passports, and then sent us to the Customs office to arrange about the payment of duty on our arms. As we had been led to believe that we would be able to carry arms through the territory without paying any further duty on them we did not appreciate that piece of intelligence. Twenty-five per cent of the value of our automatics and rifles was demanded by the Douanier, and we had to pay. The Douanier informed us that we must return to the Commissaire to obtain a permit to import the arms into the Congo Belge. It was a formality with which we had to comply in Rhodesia, but the permit had cost us nothing. It therefore came as something of a shock when the Commissaire made out the permits, and demanded 100 francs, or, as he said, £4 in English money. We demurred at that, saying the Belgium franc stood at 175 to the £1. We had taken the precaution to find that out beforehand. He shrugged his shoulders, and said that that was so, but showed us an official publication to prove that in all official dealings the franc was fixed at par—25 to the £1. If we paid him in francs—"Ah! Cela sera mieux." We slipped across the road, obtained 175 francs for an English pound and handed over 100 of them for our permits, which thus cost us 11s. 5d. instead of £4!

Remarkable—and profitable—is Belgium official finance, done their way.

Our next concern was to engage two porters to carry our baggage as far as Elizabethville, the capital of the Katanga province. When we mentioned the matter to the Commissaire, he said that the latest law governing the employment of natives in the Congo Belge forbade the hiring of natives as porters along a route traversed by mechanical transport, the object being to prevent porters competing with railways and transport companies. Another reason for the prohibition was that the big mining concerns such as the Union Minière de haut Katanga were in sore need of labour, and if boys were kept from acting as porters, a great number of labourers would be set free for the mines. Further, before an employer could move boys from one district to another, a permit, which must be paid for, had to be obtained. There were many objections to our obtaining two of the Congo's teeming millions of natives.

The Commissaire advised us to consult a firm dealing with the recruiting of native labour. We eventually did obtain our two boys through the agency of the representative of Joss, Bourgeois et Cie., recruiters of native labour, at Sakania and Elizabethville. Their services for the week would cost us £2 1s.—we had paid 1s. a day for each boy in the Rhodesia's. In spite of the recital of prohibitions, given by the Commissaire, we were informed that permits awaited us at the office of the Administration. As we approached the office we passed gangs of native prisoners strung together by chains attached to steel rings about their necks, cutting grass by the roadside, in charge of an armed native policeman. Entering the building, we heard the excited Commissaire shrieking threats at some miserable natives who stood quaking before the gesticulating, screaming officer. We collected our passes, and departed. We were not favourably impressed by the glimpses we had had of the Belgian methods of dealing with natives. It contrasted very poorly with the Rhodesian methods.

Our excursion into the Congo was made in the rainy season, and the intense moist heat rendered conditions far from ideal for walking. Heavy soaking rain generally set in late in the afternoon, and sometimes continued through the night, so that it was necessary for us to seek some shelter for the evening, as we carried no tents. Most of the railway sidings along the Chemin de fer de Katanga were in charge of Congolese natives who spoke vile French, but nevertheless we were able to converse with them. We generally took our night's rest on the hard floor of one or other of their tiny tin sheds. All night long they shouted their instructions down the telephone to the officer at the next siding—

“Ello! Ello! *Nombre deux-cents quatre-vingt-six vient!*” or “Ello! Ello! *Controle! Deux-cents quarante-cinq, pas encore!*” . . .

At intervals they clanged their signal bell vigorously. Sometimes trains—those weird and wonderful trains of the Chemin de fer de Katanga, driven by natives, manned by natives, and with native look-out men perched in front of the ill-kept unpainted, bone-shaker engines, and with natives squatting on the control platforms at the rear of each truck—would rattle into the siding, their sirens screaming in the weird pitch peculiar to engines of the C.F.K., and stop with a gasp and a bellow, that gave the impression that their boilers had blown out. Apparently they pulled up merely to let off steam, and to give the train crew an opportunity of having a chat with their ebony brothers in our sleeping quarters, for no habitations are within miles of most sidings. They were anything but pleasant, those nights when the rain poured down outside our little abodes, and mosquitoes were busy inside. Night sweats, common since our bout of malaria, helped to disturb our slumbers. Things might have been worse—but not much.

Most of the Belgian cantonniers (gangers) had native women installed in their cottages, and there was never a welcome there for strangers. Occasionally we did

come on a Belgian or Greek cantonnier, farmer, or contractor engaged in supplying the C.F.K. with wood fuel for the locomotives, who had not taken up with the black women, and we were hospitably received, but mostly we had to rely on the railway sheds for our lodgings.

Coming to a cantonnier's cottage beyond Mushushi, one afternoon, we were invited into a cottage by a cantonnier, who having completed his term of service, was on the eve of returning to Belgium. He had been celebrating the forthcoming event for some time before our arrival, and was in a very convivial mood. His cottage, in addition to the demijohn of sour wine usually to be found in such households, was stocked with beer, whisky, brandy and other liquors. It was some time before we could get away. As we left, our bibulous friend insisted on having his natives put a trolley on the line to carry us to Kafuira, our day's destination. We tried to explain that we were walking, and did not accept lifts. Our explanation failed to alter his purpose, and for three miles he followed us down the track, mounted on the trolley, which a dozen disgruntled niggers, who understood nothing of the meaning of it all, pushed from behind. He kept up a continuous bellowing of, "*Montez Messieurs, Montez!*" We called back, "*Non, nous devons marcher!*" (and other things), but it did not silence him, and he followed us in that strange manner all the way to Kafuira. The cantonnier there had the usual native wife, and we had to proceed to the remaining European abode in Kafuira—the farm of an Italian, about a mile distant in the forest. It was a picturesque place, set in the midst of banana groves and paw-paw plantations. The place afforded an illustration of what an energetic farmer could do in that productive climate. He grew every type of tropical fruit, asparagus, and vegetables. He also engaged in the manufacture of building bricks as a side line. The Italian and Greek colonists in the Katanga province are a

very good type, and those we met appeared to be prosperous.

The border-line between the Congo and Northern Rhodesia keeps very close to the railway for scores of miles south of Elizabethville, and the cleared path made by the Border Commission shortly before we passed that way, afforded us a very convenient track. It was while we were following it one day that our careers were very nearly cut short in an unexpected manner. We were passing through deep reedy grass, when a sudden loud rustling warned us that something was approaching with great rapidity. The next instant a large green mamba, the deadliest of all African snakes, and the most savage, shot out of the thicket, and made straight for us. It darted its head at my leg, which was protected by a field boot and as I jumped, it swerved, and made for Wilson, who was a little behind me, on my left. Wilson, in turn, leaped into the air, and the snake twisted towards me once more, its wicked little head raised, and its mouth open ready to sink its death-dealing fangs into any flesh against which it could strike. I nearly fell over Wilson in my effort to leap clear. It was all over in a flash, for the next move of the mamba was to slither away into the grass on the opposite side of the track, while we looked round in vain for a stick with which to despatch it. Had it managed to strike either one of us the Cape to Cairo walk would in all probability have ended then and there. Death follows a mamba bite within a very few minutes, in most cases.

At 11.20 a.m. on February 2nd we strode down L'Avenue du Gare, passed the white-domed railway station of Elizabethville, and were in the chief town of the Katanga province.

Sitting on the verandah of the Hotel Metropole, sipping a sundowner in company with a well dressed chattering crowd of Belgians, French, British, Portuguese, Greeks, Jews, and Congolese of various descent, and watching the passing show in L'Avenue de

L'Etoile, we found it hard to imagine that the jungle of what was once justly called "Darkest Africa" reached even then to the town's outskirts. Natives pass in the streets, and patter around the verandahs of the hotel in swarms, but they are in a livery that proclaims them as servants of the European. It was hard for us to associate them with the natives whom Livingstone and Stanley knew, though they have not long left their forest villages and, as is the native habit, will return to them again. A gang of native convicts, with long steel chains about their necks, clad in shorts, and the striped prison jerseys that native prisoners over the greater part of Africa wear, pass along the avenue in charge of a bare-footed khaki-clad Belgian native policeman. A long bearded Franciscan friar from one of the Katanga missions pedals by on a bicycle. A luxurious limousine, carrying a military official and an attractive woman, draws into the kerb. Raw natives, clad in discarded European rags, go swarming by; a fanfare of trumpets sounds, and a detachment of Belgian askari cycle past in good order, headed by their trumpeters. Native women, some picturesquely garbed in bright coloured frocks, rub shoulders with immaculately dressed mining magnates. Travellers, officials, cattlemen, hunters, traders, men of commerce, missionaries, soldiers, and airmen, mix in an easy-going throng, that never seems to move hurriedly, and yet seems effervescing with life. Elizabethville is never dead. A remarkable place and full of interest for even the most apathetic traveller.

CHAPTER IX

IN THE CONGO

A CONGOLESE PIONEER—ALONG THE LUAPULA ROAD—A FOREST
STORM—PORTERS TROUBLESOME—KASENGA—UNWELCOME VISITORS
—CROCODILE SHOOTING—TRAVEL BY PIROGUE—DUSKY ANGELS—A
SHAURI—THE AWEMBA PEOPLE—M'BERESHI—LUBUMBASHI JOINS US
—AN ELEPHANT HUNT—THE MELANCHOLY COOK—ABERCORN

FROM Elizabethville we intended to strike to the east across the Katanga province to the Luapula River, cross North-Eastern Rhodesia to the south end of Lake Tanganyika, pass into Tanganyika territory, and proceed through that mandated territory to Kenya. Our route after that we decided to leave for later consideration.

With the rains upon us and a thousand miles of undeveloped country ahead of us, it was necessary to re-organise slightly our method of travelling. We decided to add camp stretchers, a camp table, two camp stools, a few enamel plates and pots, to our equipment. Food, after the Luapula would have to be carried in larger quantities, as the points at which we could replenish our supplies would be very few and far between. A motor road runs from Elizabethville to Kasenga on the Luapula, and owing to the exorbitant price demanded for the hire of native porters in that area, we decided to send the greater part of our gear on by motor truck to Kasenga, and continue travelling with but two porters to that point. Afterwards all our carrying would have to be done by native porters.

Through the good graces of M. Chevalier, to whom Wilson had a note of introduction from his chief in

Johannesburg, we secured the services of the two porters for eight guineas, for the journey to Kasenga, a week's trek.

We spent five days in Elizabethville visiting the fabulously rich copper mines, and the mine where 90% of the world's radium supply is produced. Our guides were a cattleman named Jarvis, whom we had met on the road up from Sakania, and the inevitable Australian to be found wherever one happens to drop in in Africa—on this particular occasion, one named King.

We spent our first night out from Elizabethville at the hotel run by M. Chevalier near the Star of the Congo mine, and continued on to Tshisangwe, the following day. The road was fresh after the rain which had fallen overnight, and walking was pleasant. We had exchanged our breeches for shorts at Elizabethville, and voted the change a great improvement. Our route was taking us into the heart of Livingstone's country, where whites were few, and where we hoped we would make the acquaintance of an Africa that has been little changed by the advance of civilisation.

Passing down a long avenue of sisal palms at the end of the second day on the road, we reached a delightfully picturesque thatched cottage, nestling among a confusion of vines and rose bushes. That it was a roadside inn was evident. Pleasantly cool summer houses furnished with rustic benches and seats stood in front of the cottage, and empty wine bottles were stacked in neat piles nearby. Going up to the entrance, we saw an old lady seated on the porch sewing. We recognised her by the description given by M. Chevalier, as Madame E. Selvais, wife of the pioneer of the district, and herself the oldest woman settler in the province. She was a kindly, gentle old soul, and little like the woman one might have expected to find, knowing what the Congo was when she came to it twenty years before. For an adventurer into wild, almost unknown country, she appeared altogether too timid, too gentle, too weak.

We learned from her own lips that she had crossed Russia and Siberia, and had passed through Mongolia when she was a very young woman, and had later visited nearly every country, state, and principality on the face of the globe, including our own Australia.

Native villages, set in their banana groves, lined the route to the river, but the natives proved less friendly and less curious at the passing of white men, than had the happier, more joyful natives further south.

We were rather astonished, on coming to a Customs post at the junction of the Kasenga road with a track to Fort Rosebury, higher up the Luapula, to find that the Douanier in charge knew us by name and knew whither we were going. We had supplied those details to a Police officer sent to interrogate us in Elizabethville, and they had been forwarded by a native official to the Customs post, with instructions that they be carried on to all posts along our route, while we were in the Congo. We learned later that all foreigners' movements are watched, and a careful check is kept on their comings and goings. Belgian authorities are very suspicious that other nationals might conceivably have designs on their rich territory, and individuals are watched, just in case they may be secret agents.

At Malambwe, a fairly large village set in the sheltering tropical foliage, a little back from the road, we passed one night in a rest hut erected by missionaries for the convenience of passing travellers. As we were about to retire to rest, our two impossible porters intimated that they wished to share our sleeping quarters, as they were afraid of leopards and lions. We knew that the natives were greatly preyed upon at times by those beasts, but our hearts were hardened by the many misdeeds committed by those two worthies, and we told them to find a couch elsewhere. Attached to the rest hut was a large building used by the "christianised" members of the village, as a church. Our two hearties, being incorrigible children of sin, did not know the meaning of the word desecration. After being turned

away by us, they made forthwith to the church. Of a sudden we heard a commotion on the other side of the wall of dried mud, separating our hut from the church. On investigating we found that our natives had installed themselves in the church aisle, and had lighted their cooking fire on the altar!

An irate female, who was apparently the leading light in the village's christian community, was pouring the vials of her righteous wrath on the thick heads of the desecrators of the house of worship. Vituperation failing to drive them forth, she dashed to the altar, gathered up the fire, and amid the plaudits of an ebony crowd of co-religionists, scattered it to the winds outside. Two discomfited and disgruntled niggers were casting around for lodgings, making the night hideous with their shouted complaints, as we dozed off to sleep.

Game was scarce along the route, though monkeys and squirrels were plentiful, and frequently we saw fresh spoor of leopards and lions. Many of the beasts had been killed along the Kasenga road within the past few years, but every year they are becoming more scarce.

We eked out our food supply with peanuts, bananas, and, occasionally, tomatoes, potatoes, and eggs, for all those commodities were produced in large quantities in the villages. The weather continued hot and muggy during the days, and rain invariably fell at night. Arrived at Katofio village one night we pitched our flimsy silk tent, avoiding the rest house because we had been warned that it was infested with spirillum tick, the carrier of the terrible spirillum fever, which frequently renders its victims blind. That night a terrific storm burst, thunder crashed and rattled, like broadside discharges of mighty guns; lurid flashes of forked lightning dispelled the inky blackness of the night with alarming frequency, and appeared to be striking the earth at a dozen points all round us. Rain started to fall in a deluge about midnight and soon thin trickles of water began to flow in under our tent. We had sent our

stretchers on to Kasenga and were sleeping on our ground sheets. About 1.30 a.m. the thunder was still rolling menacingly, and the lightning followed quickly upon it, showing that we were in the storm centre. The rain was then coming down in a deluge, and the floor of our tent was a quagmire of mud and slush. The water had risen up to a depth of six inches, and was rising still. We could not stay there and be drowned, so gathering up our sodden blankets—we carried but one each—we quitted our flooded quarters and made a dash through the darkness to the hut. Our boys were sleeping there before a good fire, quite dry and undoubtedly highly entertained by our arrival, for they stirred into semi-wakefulness, and stared at us wonderingly before turning to sleep again. Why anyone should trouble to erect a tent when there was a good rest hut at hand was quite beyond our lazy good-for-nothings.

While halted in a thicket during the luncheon break one morning, we heard the throb of an approaching motor truck, the sound caused instant confusion amongst our priceless carriers. They dashed into our sanctuary, crying, "Bwana! Bwana! Moto, Moto!" and made frantic endeavours to gather up their bundles unmindful of the fact that we had not yet eaten. We drove them off. Instant consternation! Those helpful fellows apparently thought we could carry our own gear, or could leave it—do anything in short, so long as they were saved the walk. They were the most useless pair we had ever had the misfortune to engage. When the lorry had drawn up, driven by one of their brethren, the two made a wild rush to scramble on. In order to speed up our march, we gave the slower of the fellows that portion of the luggage we were not using, with instructions to take it on to the village where we intended camping for the night, and to await us there. The other, a cheeky sullen fellow, we told to remain. His face fell. He looked at us for a moment, then turned to rush to the truck again. Jim went to intercept him, but he adopted a fighting attitude and yelled "Hapana! Hapana!"



Chania Falls: Thika, Kenya.



The Long, Long Trail: Lower Slopes of Mt. Kenya.



Natives with Peculiar Facial Markings: Thermal Springs,
near Isiola.



Loading up our First Camels: Isiola.

(No! No!) to Jim's command to remain. At that I grabbed up my rifle, and just as he was about to jump on the truck, which was moving off, I told him to get off, or suffer the consequences. He suddenly lost all desire to ride and returned sullenly to the camping spot and sat down. Had we not been in Belgian territory, where the penalty inflicted on Europeans for punishing unruly natives is exceptionally severe, that native would probably have learned a lesson that he would not have quickly forgotten, as it was we could not afford to have trouble with the officials at Kasenga, so one thoroughly bad nigger lost his chance of regeneration. For the remainder of the $12\frac{1}{2}$ miles of the day's trek we made that native walk as he had certainly never walked in his life before—and is never likely to walk again.

Kasenga is an enormous fishing village on the river, and most of the motor traffic on the Kasenga road is concerned with the transport of fish, both smoked and fresh, to Elizabethville.

Some fifteen miles from Kasenga village we were met on the road by an official from the Department of Public Works, one, M. Boucher, who had come nine miles out from his camp to meet us, he having also received the tidings of our coming from a native messenger. Giving his bicycle over to the charge of one of the two native servants following him, he walked back with us as far as his camp. Chancing to look around after several miles had been covered, we saw that the boy who had been given the bicycle to push was carrying it on his head! M. Boucher related a story that we recollected having heard before, but which was in all probability quite true, of native roadmakers who, when first supplied with wheel-barrows by a department of Public Works intent on speeding up their labours, had filled the barrows with stones, and, lifting them on to their heads, had carried them in the manner in which Boucher's boy was carrying the bicycle.

A scared native came running to us as we came near Boucher's camp with the tidings that a lion had crossed

the road a few moments before, at a point about a mile on. We accompanied him to the spot but were unable to come up with the beast, as we could not afford to spend the time required for a long hunt.

We stayed at the Renaud homestead while we were making our preparation for the trip beyond the Luapula. The Renauds first came to Kasenga village from Elizabethville in 1916, and set up a trading post there. At the time, there were no natives on the river, and no white settlement, as the place had been declared a sleeping-sickness area by the authorities, and all the natives had been moved off to the other side of the river. We had suffered greatly from the attacks of tsetse-fly along the route, but we were assured that they carried no germs of the sleeping-sickness, which had been, it was claimed, wiped out some years before, when the natives were allowed to return. For a long time leopards and lions had been very troublesome and when the natives began to return took a heavy toll of human life. Paulo Renaud had shot lions from the window of their house on more than one occasion, but their numbers were decreasing rapidly. The night of our arrival a leopard leaped through the thatch roof of a fowl-run near the house and killed eleven ducks and fowls. Only one old rooster had escaped. When we went to investigate he was strutting about in a ridiculously haughty manner among the carcasses of his slain wives. That same night another dangerous visitor chose our host's home for a tour of inspection. A green mamba had slithered into the the kitchen and scared the wits out of the natives before it was killed.

The Luapula, source of the mighty Congo, sweeps past the doors of the collection of white-walled, thatched roofed dwellings that form the Renaud home.

We engaged seven carriers from a village on the Rhodesian side, and despatched them to a village down-stream, to await us there. We had planned to take a three day's shooting trip on the Luapula, and arranged to meet the boys at its conclusion.

Thus it came about that February 18th of last year found us being paddled down the river seated on low stools in the prow of our pirogues, with our rifles resting across our knees. It was the sunset hour, and the silence of the wilds was on river and forest. Our pirogues—long, narrow canoes, fashioned in graceful lines out of great logs—slid swiftly over the still, darkening waters, urged onwards by the powerful rhythmical strokes of the paddles wielded by our Congolese boatmen. Slowly moving above the dense foliage of the Congo shore, soft, fleecy-white cloud masses, delicately edged with pink, suggested flamingo flocks, in graceful flight. Creeper and vine and cloud cast beautiful reflections, clearly defined in the silver-grey mirror of the river's surface. Brilliant scarlet and bright yellow reed birds flitted through the trailing creepers. Not a sound disturbed the silence, save when huge fish—the imbwa (dog fish), the myane, and the long brown mutuya—leaped among the reeds of the Rhodesian side. As the sun sank lower, the silver of the river changed slowly to deep pink, until the whole surface appeared a sea of richest colour. Beauty had in that hour a new and deeper meaning for us. As if feeling the magic of it all the boatmen slowed their movements. Slowly, softly, they began their chant:—

“Tong-aye-ee coo-yai-ore
Tong-aye-ee, tu-twy-ar
Tong-aye-ee coo-li-fret-wy-ar
Tong-aye-ee coolai yor. . . .”

A huge snout and two bulging eyes rise slowly above the surface over a hundred yards away across the water. It is a difficult shot from the narrow, swaying pirogue, and my first shot goes wide, sending up a spout of water yards beyond the target. A second shot does better, catching one of those wicked, protruding eyes squarely. Our boatmen and natives along the banks proclaim the hit with delighted yells that

increase as the mortally wounded crocodile leaps almost clear of the surface and lashes the water to foam with furious sweeps of its enormous tail. The monster dives, reappears, heads across the intervening space towards our boats, swirls his tail high above the water in one last despairing effort, and disappears for good. It is our fourth "bag" for the day.

Our pirogues turned into the rushes after that, and for two hours we were poled through shallows that teemed with fish, and were congested by the craft of hundreds of fishermen, who, with their huge basket-ware nets set among the reeds, waited to ensnare their prey. We landed on a grassy shore where large herds of hump-back cattle were grazing—the first cattle we had seen since the day we entered the tsetse-fly infected Congo.

The following day we made our way up to a large native village, and were met by a great crowd of curious natives, who escorted us to the largest hut in the place—a well constructed dwelling of mud brick and thatch. Our belief was that we had reached a mission village, and the impression was strengthened when, on reaching the verandah of the big hut, we saw several uniformed natives with large badges bearing the initials "J.C." pinned to their tunics. When we inquired, however, a rather impressive-looking fellow informed us that he was Chief Chipepa, son of Chief Kazembe, Paramount Chief of the great Awemba people, the largest tribe in North-East Rhodesia, once a mighty warrior tribe, and a great power in the land. Chipepa told us that the letters worn by his retainers stood for "Joseph Chipepa"—the name he had been given when he was a boy attending the Mbereshi Mission, and, later, the Livingstonia Mission, in Nyassaland. He was a small, sharp-featured fellow, with an intelligent face and an alert manner. He was dressed in a khaki riding outfit, complete with breeches and leather leggings, though he had never seen a horse in his life. After leaving the

mission—where he learned to speak excellent English—he had returned to his tribe as a sub-chief under his great father.

We learned later that he had been imprisoned by the British authorities on one occasion, for preaching sedition, when disciples of the infamous Watch Tower Movement had been active in the district. The Watch Tower Movement, by the way, was started by a band of native fanatics, and had its birth in America. When its gospel was brought to the African wilds it caused not a little unrest among the gullible natives and many crimes were committed by its adherents. One of its tenets was that the world was to end on a certain day. An amusing sidelight arose from the local natives' acceptance of that belief. One day a missionary arrived in a village near Chipepa's and found the villagers packing up their goods and chattels, as if in preparation for departure. Asked for the reason of the activity the natives replied that the world was coming to an end that day, and they were preparing for the event. They had been informed by an "apostle" of the Watch Tower Movement that they would all grow wings and fly away when the catastrophe occurred. The missionary asked if he could stay and witness the interesting event. No objections being raised, he remained. Presently he was astonished to see the natives—women, old men, piccanins and all—climbing, or being assisted, on to the sloping thatch roofs of their huts. They believed that they would be able to get a better take-off from such vantage points when their wings sprouted!

All that day they remained aloft, a ludicrously funny assembly of aspiring coloured angels. Towards evening they became restless. One old fellow crashed through the thatch on to the hard ground below, and others began to murmur as cramp affected them. At that moment the apostle appeared on the scene and called them all down, explaining that the event had been postponed because many of the women had mounted

their perches without waiting to don the scanty girdle that modesty demanded!

There was a darker side to the movement, and sedition was preached widely. It was not until several of the "apostles" who had been going about the country "baptising" people in the rivers, so effectually that they had no further chance of sinning, life having been suffocated out of them through being held under the water too long, were caught and hanged, that enthusiasm for the movement began to wane.

At Chipepa's we found awaiting us the porters we had sent on ahead before starting our shooting trip on the Luapula. We apportioned our baggage between them in loads of 50 lbs. each, and started north for the Native Commissioner's post at Kawambwa, 80 miles on.

Between Chipepa's village and Kawambwa, lies Mbereshi Mission, one of the most famous of all Central African missions. During our journey to the mission we had an opportunity of becoming acquainted with the North-Eastern Rhodesia "boys"—and fine fellows we found them. Our walk through their villages, which cluster thickly along the Luapula, was something in the nature of a royal progress, for the white man's prestige stands very high in that territory, although the natives, a happy, bright people, are more heavily taxed than their Belgian brothers, and receive nothing but their just dues from a very able administration.

Our entry into the villages was the sign for remarkable demonstrations of enthusiasm. Piccanins by the hundred followed in our wake, rushing and scrambling to get a place in the laughing, cheering throng pressing at our heels. As we passed on our way, the whole village populace would come pouring out of their huts, or come running from the fields to bob their heads and bodies in greeting. Wrinkled old veterans, matrons with many piccanins, young girls, and strapping young men, sank down on to their heels, clapped their hands

and intoned, "Mwapoleni Mukwai! Mwapoleni!"—the conventional salutation. All were happy and smiling and it was plain that their enthusiasm was not feigned. Some hundreds of children and young girls—many with piccanins strapped to their backs—followed for miles as we passed on, and in a very short time there was a retinue of huge proportions running and leaping in our wake, laughing and chattering the while. At times the cheering which greeted our arrival at a village was deafening. Clearly, the advent of white men in that part, if not a rare event, had certainly not become a commonplace.

At the mission we were greeted by Dr. and Mrs. Wareham, the Mission Superintendent and his wife. They made us very welcome, and provided hot baths and a very comfortable room, and over dinner persuaded us to stay a day at the mission.

The place, which was founded in 1902, contains wide acres, well laid out grounds, and buildings of stout construction. The double storey residence, occupied by Dr. and Mrs. Wareham; the quarters of the women's staff; a building housing the head of the industrial section of the mission and his male staff; school buildings; a church; a hospital, and an infant clinic, are all constructed of brick and tiled with slates manufactured by mission labour.

We arrived at Kawambwa on the occasion of my twenty-fourth birthday, and celebrated the event fittingly. A terrific storm broke shortly after our arrival, an inch and a half of rain falling within an hour. Central Africa was in a frigid mood that day, and we enjoyed the novel experience of sitting before a blazing fire in the comfortably furnished quarters of the Native Commissioner and his wife, listening to the strains of "Ol' Man Ribber" and selections from "Rose Marie", played on a very fine gramophone.

Our immediate concern was to obtain fresh porters to replace our Luapula boys, but though messengers had gone out before the rain broke, and returned

before nightfall, they had been unable to secure the services of a single porter. It was then that Umbashi came into the picture. He had arrived a little behind us from Chipepa's village, and had confided to McKisack that he wanted to follow us in any capacity for as long as we would allow him to serve us. We engaged him on the spot. He soon proved his worth, for to our surprise and satisfaction he brought along a sepulchral-visaged, undersized, very ragged, but wiry-looking brother. For that service we appointed Umbashi our capita, or head-boy, without further ado.

The following morning we were still without our required number of porters, so we arose as the native bugler sounded the Reveille and accompanied McKisack to his office, where about a score of native tax-defaulters were to answer for their sins of omission, hoping to recruit some from their number. We looked them over and found that there were several who would suit our purpose, so we seated ourselves in the office to attend the result of their trial. One by one they were hustled before McKisack by the efficient and officious police boys. We were greatly amused at the earnestness with which the police boys carried out their duties. Each prisoner was called to attention and admonished by first one, and then another, of the policemen, until he came to a full appreciation of the deference for constituted authority that was demanded of him. By the time that state was reached he was standing solemn-faced, as stiff as a ramrod, and not a little nervous, before the acting-magistrate, doubtless fully prepared to hear imposed upon him the direst penalty that the law could inflict. There was little ground for nervousness, however, as the heaviest penalty was a fine of 7s. 6d., or in default a month's road work. When all the culprits had heard the worst, several were asked if they were prepared to earn 4s. of their fine by accompanying us as porters, and five of them agreed. Taking leave of our host that same afternoon we followed in the wake of our seven

porters, bound for Abercorn at the south end of Lake Tanganyika.

The Kalungwisi River, a broad stream flowing into Lake Meru, was the first of the many considerable waterways which we had to cross in the course of our journey through that land of rivers. We reached it in the heat of one afternoon and were ferried across in a huge canoe piloted by river natives. All our goods having been transported safely across, we inquired if the river contained many crocodiles. Perhaps our knowledge of the local dialect was at fault—perhaps the natives were merely unreliable. Anyhow, they informed us that there was not a crocodile in the stream. Forthwith we stripped and dived in. We were splashing around merrily when an elder came running to the river edge and excitedly urged us to leave the water. He said something about mambas, which in those parts means crocodiles. Needless to say our enthusiasm for river bathing evaporated, and we scrambled out. The old fellow informed us that the river was actually swarming with the saurians. We took good care to place little reliance on the natives' knowledge of the natural history of their district after that.

Umbashi early showed that he had our interests at heart. One of our boys having made an excursion to a village after we had made camp one night, returned with eggs and a few native trinkets that he attempted to sell to us at an exorbitant rate. Umbashi immediately stepped into the bargaining, grabbed the avaricious one's wares, and sold them to us at a very moderate price. Handing the money to the would-be profiteer he admonished him severely, for trying to sell trash to the Bwanas at inflated rates.

The country which we were then traversing was deeply forested. For several days we were puzzled by the frequency with which huge trees came crashing down on either hand. Day after day we could hear the forest giants smashing to the earth, and when one

fell perilously close to our *safari* we made an examination. The reason then for the inordinate number of collapsing trunks and branches, was obvious. Each and every one of the trees had been attacked by Bubenshi, or termites, the white ants of popular parlance. None who travels through this region can help being impressed by the phenomenal activity of those pests. In the hot, moist, heavily timbered regions, termites of every size and species flourish exceedingly, and they do not confine their attentions to the forest. One of the chief cares of the dweller in those parts, is to keep his home from tumbling in upon him. Neglect to check the ravages of the pest would result in disaster to the structure in an astonishingly short time, and even with all care, thatched roofs, almost universal in Central African dwellings, have to be replaced every few years. Deserted houses become ruined in a few months. A common feature of the landscape are the enormous ant pillars sometimes 40 feet high. The whole country-side is covered with them. Frequently as one passes along a loud rustling may be heard beneath the deep piles of leaves. It is a very puzzling phenomenon at first, but if one scrapes the leaves aside he discovers that thousands of white ants are busily engaged in reducing the leaves to dust. To guard against these ravages Europeans are forced to erect concrete foundations on which to build their houses.

Bubenshi is not without his uses however, as he provides, or his hillocks provide, the material for most of the brick-built houses, for tennis courts, and for the plaster with which the walls of Central African dwellings are covered. For all that he is chiefly regarded as a pest of the worst type. Fortunately he has a deadly enemy, the vicious M'pashi, a red ant of the type favoured by the Chinese torturers of old. M'pashi moves in enormous numbers, travelling in columns that seem endless, and throwing up a kind of low protecting earthwork as he moves. Frequently we

tried to trace the end of some of those columns, but our patience and time ran out before we were able to do so. It is certain that often he advances in millions, and one district magistrate, with whom we stayed, informed us that when he was stationed at Kasama in the same district, he took the opportunity of observing a column passing a point. It commenced to cross a path at 10 a.m. one day, and by keeping a careful observation, he chanced to see the end of it crossing at 4 p.m. on the following day—thirty hours to pass, and they travel twenty deep! As an instrument of torture Mpashi could not be improved upon. He is vicious, attacks *en masse*, and his bite is acutely painful. When he sets forth to give battle to his helpless cousin, the Bubenshi, he gives no quarter, but swarms through the ant heap or dwelling in which the prey has taken up its quarters, and exterminates the lot. In such a manner the red-ant hordes have quite frequently earned the gratitude of humans in Africa, by sweeping termite-infested dwellings clear at one onslaught.

Big game was plentiful in the district, but we saw little of it until we crossed the Lofubu, or Hippopotamus River. Then we frequently sighted water-buck, reedbuck, and impala, and from that time our diet was eked out by much fresh meat. At a little village by the Luangwa stream we made our evening halt one day, and were informed by the natives that a huge elephant herd had raided the village during the morning, played havoc with manioc and mealie fields, and torn down the protecting stockades. We decided to hunt them. Accompanied by Umbashi, and a guide from the village, we visited the scene of their depredations. The account of their behaviour had not been exaggerated. Crops had been trampled flat and the huge beasts had walked in and out of the field by the simple expedient of crashing through the stout stockades of interlaced bamboo and sapling as if they were paper structures. Picking up the trail we struck into the forest at a rapid gait and for five hours pushed through

deep grass, tangled undergrowth and thick forest in their wake. Back and forth the trail twisted and turned up hill and down, across streams and small rivers, sometimes swinging back to within a few miles of our starting point, and then sheering off again for miles into the forest. Tracks crossed and recrossed each other, and it was evident that the area was a favourite haunt of the beasts. Our quarry had made their way leisurely enough, stopping at the base of huge ant hills to rest in the deep grass for a time, halting to push over a tree of considerable size here and there, apparently out of sheer devilment, sometimes kicking away the tree roots and all, flush with the ground and at others snapping the great trunk in half. They had had a good start, however, and although the spoor became fresher as we pushed on, we did not come up with them. Towards dusk we could not have been more than a mile or so behind them, for the keen-eyed Umbashi picked up a leaf from that tangle of undergrowth that was wet with the blood from a scratch that one of the beasts had apparently received when pushing its bulk through the thick timber. We followed for a while longer, it being evident that we were drawing closer and closer, but darkness cut short the pursuit, for as we were a long way from camp we were compelled to abandon our first real elephant hunt without the satisfaction of having had a shot.

The melancholy individual introduced to our *safari* by Umbashi at Kawambwa had proved quite a character. We had made him our cook boy, and from the moment he took over his duties, he ceased to be as of the ordinary run of his kind, but became one of that great brotherhood of cooks for whom there are no other interests on this earth than the preparation of food, and its attendant duties. To all other things that occupy the mind of common men they are oblivious. During the day this fellow would carry his load with the rest, but he held himself aloof from his fellow toilers, regarding himself as of rarer clay, and far

above his less gifted fellows. When meal-time arrived he took possession of the camp, and treated even ourselves with a lofty scorn when we presumed to advise him in an art of which, he was fully persuaded, we were the veriest amateurs.

We passed but one other English outpost on the route to Abercorn, Mporokoso, the nearest point to Umbashi's home village. Strangely enough, although Umbashi had been away from his kraal for several months already at that stage, he did not seek permission to journey up to the lake country—only a few days' walk from Mporokoso—in order to see his loving wife and piccanin. In fact it was not until many months later that we learned that he had a wife at all.

On March 4th our path through the forest ended suddenly on the edge of a steep escarpment. Below us, we saw rolling away to the distant horizon, the plains and wooded hills of Tanganyika Territory. On our left was a stirring spectacle—a sea of deepest purple, girt by a wild jumble of rugged, mist enshrouded mountains. Away to the north it stretched, beyond the limits of our vision. Rocky crags cast dark shadows on its sombre surface, and the sparkle of blue waters that marked where the narrow ribbon of the Lunzua River emptied itself, served but to enhance the darksome aspect of the lake. Lake Tanganyika lay before us.

That day we came to Abercorn, a place which looms large on the map of Africa, but which in reality is a settlement containing a population of but eight souls. We made our way up its single avenue and deposited our baggage at the Tanganyika Victoria Memorial Institute—Abercorn's "Hotel"—a relic of the days when a great future was promised for the district. Visitors may make use of its library and living-room for the modest sum of 1s. a night.

Abercorn, despite its small population, has several solid buildings along its avenue. The Boma, or administrative offices, the post office, the African Lakes Corporation's store, and the homes of the officials,

being all well constructed in brick. It is 4,700 feet above sea level and only 26 miles from the lake. Its main claim to distinction, these days is that it was the historic spot where the forces of General Von Lettow-Vorbeck surrendered at the signing of the Armistice, after their remarkable campaign in German East Africa.



CHAPTER X

TANGANYIKA TO RUKWA

WE ENTER TANGANYIKA TERRITORY—THE KALAMBO FALLS—LAKE
TANGANYIKA—TSETSE AND SLEEPING SICKNESS—SUMBAWANGA—
NATIVES ON THE SPREE—LAKE RUKWA—A GAME PARADISE—
IGALULA MISSION

TWO HUNDRED and fifty points of rain fell during the first twenty-four hours we were at Abercorn waiting for the Boma officials to secure our porters for the first stage of the journey through Tanganyika Territory. They came at the end of the second day, and leaving the little township in the fresh cool morning, we took a weed-grown path that was once the main road through the mountains to the German lake-shore post of Bismarckburg, now known as Kasanga.

The country surrounding the south end of Lake Tanganyika is extremely rugged as forest-covered mountains rise above it in a confusion of intersecting ranges, that run right down to the water's edge, and even jut out into the lake itself. We started climbing as soon as we were out of the township, and a half-hour's walking brought us into the very heart of the ranges. The track was grass-grown, and almost invisible, for in these days the importance of Kasanga has vanished. The bridges are almost rotted away and in places, a few decayed poles, that have to be negotiated Blondin-fashion, are the only means of crossing the mountain streams. It is a region of great beauty. Tropic vegetation of all varieties—giant ferns and creepers, deep waving grasses and mighty forest trees, cover the slopes, and fill the mighty valleys. Purple mists enfold the

distant peaks, and hang low over the deep blue waters of the lake, glimpsed occasionally from the highest ridges. That day mountains and valley and lake were arched over by a pearl-grey sky, flecked with filmy clouds, silver-edged where the morning sun caught them. The breeze blew fresh and cool, and the rain-washed grasses sparkled with a million diadems of shining drops. It was good to be abroad in such a spot on such a day. Late in the afternoon we came to the swollen Kalambo River, and crossed by a long pole bridge into Tanganyika Territory. On the hill on the Tanganyika side a German rock fort, used as an outpost from which the border was watched, early in the East African campaign, was falling in ruins. It was a grim reminder of the fact that mankind recognises no spot, however beautiful, however calm and peaceful as sacrosanct when war-drums roll. From that point we could hear the dull rumbling of distant falls, and that night we camped above the gorge into which the Kalambo River plunges nine hundred feet to the lake level.

Next morning we sent the boys on ahead, and went to view one of the most remarkable sights that it was our privilege to see in the course of our journey—the little known Kalambo Falls, over twice the height of the Victoria Falls, and the highest in the world. Their setting is the grandest imaginable. A slate-grey torrent slides in a gentle curve around an avenue of huge trunks, tumbles over a low ledge of rock, seethes and bubbles in a turmoil of foaming waters, and then shoots forward over the edge of the mighty abyss. Sheer down it goes, a nine-hundred-foot column of flashing waters that smash with a dull roar into the spray-filled cauldron below. A cavern that it has worn in the rock contains it for a while, and then it rushes away through a beautiful, winding gorge along the bottom of a mighty valley, sweeps round the end of one of its containing walls, and emerges, a thread of shining silver cutting across a lawn of emerald by the lake's shore, to



Rattray Breaking in a Zebra at his Ranch, near Isola.



A dead Rhino. Near Langaia Camp, Northern Frontier.



An Oryx Shot on Mt. Marsabit.



The K.A.R. Detachment with which we Trekked to Lake
Rudolph: Marsabit.

disappear into the all-enshrouding mists above the lake.

From the falls we followed along the crest of a ridge skirting the lake shore, and wound down through the trees to the deserted fortress of Bismarckburg, perched above the lake, at the end of a rocky promontory. Untended since 1926, the old stronghold appears to be brooding in its isolation over its departed glories. Its stout gates, the locks and bars removed, swing crazily on rusty hinges; the battlements are crumbling, and the court-yards are overgrown with rank weeds.

Following a unique naval engagement between armed British motor-boats and the German gun-boat, *Fifi*, during the early days of the war, the garrison abandoned the fort, and it was taken over by the victorious naval detachment. When German East Africa was handed over to the care of Britain, as the mandate of Tanganyika Territory, the name Bismarckburg was changed to Kasanga, and the fort served as a British boma (Administrative post) until 1926, when it was abandoned. It is now untenanted, except when way-farers pass that way. By a coincidence, four of us shared the shelter of those bare walls that night—a missionary from the south end of the lake named Clark, a Dane, who had tramped from the Mica mines, near Lake Rukwa, 120 miles to the east, in order to catch the lake steamer when it arrived in a fortnight's time from the northern port of Kigoma, and our two selves.

Kasanga, now given over to the Arabs and the natives, is an interesting village, having very little communication with the outside world. Shut in by mountains and lake, it attracts no visitors save those who pass it *en route* to other centres. As we passed around the lake shore to join the Tabora Road, which climbs over the mountains just beyond the outskirts of the village, Arabs and natives came out of their huts to greet us. In the market-place, throngs of natives were clamouring about the stalls where fresh meat and fish, piles of coloured beans, small bundles of native tobacco,

and little heaps of fragments of dried fish, were exposed for sale.

It was a lazy, peaceful scene, but we did not loiter long, as we had a difficult climb ahead, and the sun was beginning to make the air unpleasantly hot. For the next hour we climbed a wall of earth and rock that went up for about 2,500 feet, almost sheer from the edge of the lake. It was a difficult enough climb for Jim and me, though we carried nothing but our rifles; for the porters with their fifty pound loads it was a herculean task, and all were exhausted when the summit was reached. All that day we passed through mountains. The natives we met were all armed with bows and poisoned arrows, instead of with the assegais or spears, common to all the tribes hitherto encountered.

Umbashi told us that the men of his village, up on the shore of Lake Meru, also used the bow and arrow. The poison employed in treating the steel barb was obtained from certain plants, and was very deadly. He himself had earned the tribal marking on the wrists, which denoted that he had brought down an elephant, single handed, with an arrow so treated. The track which we were following was the old slave-route from Tabora to Nyassaland, much used in the bad old days, but now almost swallowed up by the encroaching forest. We took a branch of it, trekked down to a wide hill-girt plain covered with deep yellowing grass, seven to ten feet in height, and followed across it for several days. It was unpleasant walking, for the grass was saturated with rain, and we were soaked to our skins for the whole time. It was a relief when we left it behind, and climbed again to the heights.

Crossing through the cloud-capped mountains, we came one day to a beautiful valley, at the foot of which nestled the little boma of Sumbawanga, where we made the acquaintance of the District Officer of the Ufipa District, Mr. J. E. S. Lamb, and his wife. From Sumbawanga we had intended following the slavers' route to Kilamatinde on the Dar-es-Salaam—Kigoma Railway.

From the British office we received the disconcerting information that the route passed across a belt of territory which was under quarantine because of the virulence of the sleeping-sickness in the area. We could make the attempt if we liked, he said, but it would be almost impossible to obtain carriers, as all the natives in the area had been segregated, and their villages burned. Food would be unobtainable, and if we did manage to engage boys, and a permit was granted to allow them to travel, we would have to carry their food for the whole journey, a distance of some hundreds of miles. Sumbawanga is on the border of the condemned territory, which extends from the north end of Lake Rukwa, in a broad belt, running north-west to Lake Tanganyika. The sleeping-sickness in the area is carried by *Glossina morsitans*, a tsetse-fly which infects its victims with *Trypanosoma rhodesiense*, an active disease agent, which brings death within a very short time.

It is extremely virulent, and the natives had died off like flies before the Administration had taken in hand the task of combating it. Death had followed almost invariably seven months after it was first contracted. Some white men, including two doctors, sent out from England to assist the Administration in its efforts, had fallen victims of the disease. One of the doctors had returned home, but at the time of our arrival at Sumbawanga the other—an unsung hero—was still carrying on with his work among the stricken natives, keeping a serum syringe in his pocket, and using it on himself whenever he felt the deadly symptoms threatening to put him out of the field of action.

After some debate, we decided that the difficulties in the way of cutting through the condemned area would, in all likelihood, prove insurmountable, for without porters we could never hope to get through. Somewhat reluctantly we decided on a route which would lead us south-east around the south end of Lake Rukwa, and north again through Iringa, to Dodoma, a point on the Dar-es-Salaam—Kigoma Railway some 60 odd miles

east of Kilamatinde, our original goal. It meant a detour of roughly 250 miles, but as there appeared nothing else for it, we resigned ourselves to the change of route, and started for Rukwa. By adhering to our original plan, the best we had to look forward to would be endless trouble regarding porters—the worst would be an infection of the most horrible nature.

The District Officer obtained for us the services of half a dozen porters who agreed to take us as far as Kipeta village, on the Saisi, or Mamba River, where we were to present a letter to Mwene Kiwanga, the local chief, and obtain a further change of carriers. The boys, for the 76 mile journey to Kipeta and return, were to receive 1s. 6d. in addition to a 1s. "posho", or food allowance—a remarkable contrast with the rates ruling for porter hire in the Congo.

Sumbawanga is 6,000 feet above sea level and immediately after leaving it our route ascended a further 1,000 feet. For days we were walking literally amongst the clouds, and the nights were bitterly cold. Wilson and I had but one blanket each, and sleep came to us but fitfully in that frigid atmosphere. The natives in the mountains were very successful agriculturalists, and tomatoes, potatoes, and French and broad beans were always obtainable at a very moderate cost.

One night in the mountains we heard a clamour in a valley below us, and presently a horde of half-naked savages came leaping up the hillside towards us. Coming near, they surrounded us, and began a wild performance that left us in some doubt as to their intentions. Yelling and grimacing they circled us, jumping and dancing with extraordinary abandon. Some came very close, and scowled almost in our faces. We were about to take some action to disperse them, being assured by that time that their attitude was far from friendly, when a strong odour of native beer reached us, and enlightened us as to the nature of the demonstration. They were all extremely drunk.

After continuing their antics for some time longer they suddenly turned, and led by their chief formed into a triumphal procession that preceded us into the village. That night we had a banquet. Boiled chicken and potatoes, beans, bread and jam and a gooseberry tart! We were loath to leave that land of plenty.

The next day we passed between twin peaks and reached the edge of an escarpment that fell away precipitously to the plain of Rukwa, 5,000 feet below. All the afternoon we slipped and slid down the rugged face of that precipice, at times dislodging huge boulders, that went bounding down the uneven path, until they struck some ledge and went hurtling down in a straight drop to the foot of some mighty ravine. It was terribly difficult and dangerous work, and several times we slipped and went rolling for several feet until we were brought up against a conveniently placed boulder. Despite the rocky nature of the slope, vegetation grew very thickly, and hid many dangerous crevices, into which we frequently avoided plunging by the narrowest of margins. Once I stumbled over the edge of a fifteen feet ledge, shot down feet foremost, through the jungle-like growth of grass and creepers, and landed on my heels with a jolt that made my teeth rattle, at the very edge of steep ravine that fell away some hundreds of feet below me. How the natives succeeded in getting their loads down that precipitous wall without mishap, is a miracle.

On the plain it was difficult to believe that a cool land of plenty lay so near at hand, for we found ourselves in a drought-stricken, sun-baked region where the natives had been without any food, save fish from the Lake Rukwa, for several months.

After the rain and coolness of the mountains, trekking across that scorched plain was a sore trial. Although it was then the middle of March, the rains, due in October, had not fallen. The mealie fields were sorry looking patches of withered plants, and mealie-meal for the boys

was not to be obtained in any village. It was a serious matter, for without their mealie-meal the boys were reduced to what is, for them, a starvation diet. Meat and fish will sustain life in them but is totally unsatisfying, and tales of woe were poured into our ears on every hand. We rationed out the meagre supply of mealie-meal we carried with us, to our porters, but there was not nearly sufficient, and the boys grumbled unceasingly. As we advanced farther and farther from the plateau edge the heat increased considerably, and as the only water to be had was found in muddy pools, that were few and far between, the agonies of thirst were added to our troubles. It was with a feeling of devout thankfulness that we arrived at the wooded banks of the Saisi River and were able to dispense with the services of our exhausted porters. Chief Mwene Kiwanga, the Sultani of the district, a man of considerable influence amongst the natives of the Rukwa plain, came out from his large village to meet us. He was an impressive-looking fellow, dressed after the Arab fashion in a white skirt and a long black robe. To shelter him from the sun he carried a large umbrella, of which he appeared extraordinarily proud. He spoke no English, and we had not then scraped up more than a very slight acquaintance with the Kiswahili tongue, the universal native language in Tanganyika, Kenya and Uganda. We had the District Officer's letter to the chief, but the only man of the village who could read was away. We were in a predicament, for the letter, which was written in Kiswahili, contained Lamb's instructions regarding our requirements for fresh porters. Fortunately, written Kiswahili is more or less phonetic, and when I made an attempt at reading it the old Sultani understood and managed to convey to us that he would supply our needs. He conducted us to a large stockaded rest-hut, and set his men about the task of cleaning it. We called for water and firewood and he went in person to give orders accordingly. In a very short time a score of native women, each bearing a large pot of water on her head,

filed through the entrance of the rest hut enclosure, and silently placed their burdens by the hut. Others followed with firewood and bowls of milk.

When we spoke about the porters again that night the Sultani informed us that henceforth in our journey across the plain, it would be necessary to engage fresh porters at almost every village, as the boys would not venture far away from home, owing to the famine conditions. It would mean slow progress, but it was the only practicable manner of securing porters at all. We recruited six boys at Kipeta, and prepared to make the passage of the river. There was only one crazy dug-out canoe available, and the stream was running like a mill-race. To get the baggage, the boys, and ourselves across, the craft had to make several trips, each of which threatened to end in disaster. There was only one practical landing place on the other shore, and that was directly opposite the village. A swirling torrent raced between.

The method adopted by the paddlers was to pull the dug-out up-stream, by tugging at the rushes along the bank, shoot out to the centre of the river with quick powerful strokes of the paddle, and then work furiously to edge the canoe into the backwater at the landing place. Once well launched on the stream, the current caught the canoe and swirled it, broadside on, down-stream. It was always a matter of touch and go whether we would make the other shore or not. The whole of our *ulendo* was safely transported across, however, though Jim and I were nearly brushed out of the narrow craft when the boys were dragging it up stream against the rushes. A tributary stream barred our passage after we had advanced a short distance, but we risked the crocodiles and waded across. Five miles only the porters took us, to Msambo village, and then informed us that they were going no further.

We had thought that the villages would not be so close together, and we now reckoned that the journey across the plain would take us months, instead of weeks, if we

had to change porters every five miles or so, for it is never a matter of merely walking into a village, asking for porters, and starting off again within a half an hour or so. Such an apparently simple matter as engaging a few porters becomes a complicated business, when one has to deal with the natives themselves. Boys who appear to have nothing to do suddenly find a dozen small matters, some of them requiring a journey of anything up to a dozen miles, to be attended to. The traveller is fortunate if the change-over of porters is effected within the space of half a day. At Msambo we paid our Kipeta boys the munificent sum of $\frac{1}{2}d.$ a man, and sat down to wait until the chief had arranged the usual preliminaries incidental to hiring a few of his men. This particular individual was an important-looking fellow, dressed in a black robe, edged with gold braid, wore a red fez on his head, and carried a long sword with a silver handle of curious design, which, he proudly informed us, had been presented to him by the Germans when they were in possession of the land. He despatched a liveried messenger, a servant of the Paramount Chief of the district, to the shambas (fields) for our porters, and informed us that we could not expect them until 2 p.m., although it was then only early morning. He cheered us up, however, by assuring us that he would instruct the boys to go with us as far as Igalula Mission, on the shore of Lake Rukwa, $3\frac{1}{2}$ days' journey off.

Umbashi won the old fellow's good graces early, and at the close of our interview the pair went off together to the chief's hut. When Umbashi reappeared a little later, his demeanour indicated that something even stronger than the evil-looking, vile-smelling water that the villages supplied, had been passed around. He entertained us with a long harangue, detailing the virtues of that excellent chief.

There being nothing else to do, Jim and I made ourselves comfortable beneath the shade of a tree, and I entertained myself by giving a vastly interested audience

a geography lesson on Africa, and the other continents of the globe, illustrated by a map drawn on the ground. Ignorant as they were, the natives followed very intelligently all I had to say, repeating to each other the information I passed on in my pidgin Swahili. They were greatly interested to learn where the country of their late masters, the Germans, was situated. They were astonished that England was such a "piccanin" among countries, and asked how it was that the "Inglesi", who came from such a little island, were such important people. They were very excited when I told them of the big waters between the continents and of the "mkubwa bwato" (big boats) that sailed across them. *I told them, too, of boats that went under the water, and blew up big ships during the war, and they repeated amongst themselves that the white men had boats which were just like "mambas" (crocodiles).* I heard one explaining to another how these German "mambas" went down under the English "mkubwa bwato", and broke them up—though I had not explained which nation's submarines had done most of the blowing up. They then informed me that they had seen a boat go through the air over their village, like a "nkuku" (bird), and asked me where it was going. I told them to Capetown, indicating where Capetown was. I also added how men had flown in such boats from England to Australia, and they were amazed. In order to see how they would take it, I told them of other wonders of modern science—the telephone, television, and other things. They showed, by imitating men listening to, and seeing, each other, from a long way off that they partly comprehended what I was saying, but they shook their heads and chuckled tolerantly when I assured them that such things were really facts. It was all very entertaining.

Unexpectedly the messenger arrived from the sham-bas at the appointed time, bringing with him porters for the journey to Igalula, and we moved off without further waste of time.

Villagers further across the plain were suffering more acutely from the drought than those nearer the Saisi. Their food supplies were, with the exception of dried fish, quite exhausted, and wherever we passed we were greeted with lamentations and wailing. Fortunately the Rukwa plain abounds in game of all descriptions, and we readily fell in with the suggestion of the inhabitants of the villages, in which we camped for the night, that they should proceed with us next day, and take away the lion's share of any beasts we shot. They themselves appeared to be too lethargic, by reason of the stifling heat and their lack of food, to do any successful hunting for themselves. It was a source of wonder to Umbashi during those days, that any poor misguided native should elect to live in such a miserable land, when there was a fertile country of many rivers and thriving shambas less than a month's journey away, in the region of his beloved Mporokoso.

Difficulties relating to water supply assumed greater proportions as we advanced. We thirsted throughout the days, and at night drew our drinking water from muddy pools, most of them fouled by game, in the vicinity of the villages. It was very necessary to treat it with permanganate of potash, and boil it before drinking. For washing, we allowed ourselves a couple of mugs of the odorous fluid each. A greater part of the plain consists of unfertile alkaline soil on which nothing but coarse reed grasses will grow and all the water in that area was distinctly brackish. It is, perhaps, on account of the alkaline nature of the soil that game is attracted to the plain in such numbers, for our observation tended to confirm the idea that animals require a certain percentage of alkaline salts to keep them in condition, and will often travel for great distances from more fertile areas to the barren desolate wastes in which feed is very scarce, but where the salt can be obtained. Not far from the lake itself—exactly 3,000 miles from Capetown to be exact—we came to a large salt pool. Several thatched-roofed dwellings,

tumbling in ruins, set on a sandy hill above the lake and papers lying around, furnished us with the information that the place had been a salt works, run by a European company which, however, had been abandoned.

Our own food supplies were running low, and before our journey across the plain was completed our sugar and flour ran out.

We had been trekking for nearly a week across the sun-baked flats before we caught our first sight of the lake itself. We came on it about noon of one scorching day, at its most southerly margin. We were out of water, and we hurried to the shore, hoping against hope that its waters would not prove to be salt. As we approached the edge, huge flights of cranes, ducks, Egyptian geese and wild fowl of every description, rose from the black, muddy shallows. Three hippos were disporting themselves about half a mile from the shore, and we noticed that when they stood up the water came only to their knees—a fact which confounded our hopes of finding the waters fresh. A shallow lake in such a blisteringly hot depression must almost certainly be salt. However, we were parched, and had to drink. We waded out for several hundred yards through the black ooze, and found that the water, even at that distance, did not come above our ankles. The lake was absolutely infested with crocodiles—at the mission next day, we were shown a photograph taken by the Father Superior, in which three hundred crocodiles could, with the aid of a magnifying glass, be counted, slumbering in the shallows. It would have been unwise to venture deeper into the lake so we stooped and sampled the slime in which we stood. To our surprise, it was drinkable, but decidedly brackish. While we stood there gulping down large quantities of it herds of impala, water-buck and reed-buck, came down to drink, and although they eyed us suspiciously, did not appear greatly alarmed, and having moved off to a distance of twenty yards, went on feeding quietly.

We were never without a sufficiency of fresh meat in the days that followed.

When the boys, who had been lagging at some distance behind us, came down to the lake, they dropped their loads and ran, not to the water, but to a tree some distance back from the shore, and threw themselves down on their stomachs. Going across to them, we found that they were drinking deeply from a filthy pool of yellowish-red water, which they assured us was much better drinking than the lake itself. We tasted it and voted it vile, for it was obvious that innumerable herds of game had wallowed in it, and indeed zebra, buffalo, antelope and lion and leopard spoor was plentiful in the soft mud around its edge. Experience, however, had proved to us that the natives were better judges of what water was fit for drinking than ourselves. On previous occasions our boys had deterred us from drinking from clear rock pools and urged us to sample filthier water, near at hand. They had assured us that the clearer fluid was poisoned, and although we never had an opportunity of proving their word it was significant that on such occasions animal spoor was not to be found around the apparently good water while it was plentiful by the other. We lunched by that shallow pan, and filled our water bottles from it, taking the precaution to treat it generously with permanganate crystals. We suffered no ill effects from drinking it.

Leaving the lake we climbed to slightly higher ground and passed into pleasant forest country, a welcome change after the almost treeless plain. Monkeys had their homes in the trees, magnificent antelope grazed in the shady clearings, and altogether there were evidences that we were approaching a more pleasing tract of country. In places we crossed through river-beds cut deeply in the soft soil, dry at that season, but shaded by dense tropical foliage. Still gradually rising from the plain level we entered a region where the grass grew rank and coarse, to a height of eight

to ten feet. For mile after mile we engaged in the wearisome task of forcing a passage through it. It was hard work for us, unburdened as we were, but for the boys, weak through lack of adequate food, and weighted down by their loads, it was dispiriting in the extreme. They grumbled frequently, and we had difficulty in persuading them of the futility of attempting, with our diminished food supplies to advance in short stages. We hardened our hearts and drove them on, and on March 21st got through to Igalula Mission, and received a hospitable welcome from the three White Fathers in charge. They were not a little astonished to see us for visitors rarely call on them. Their last guest had been the Duke of Gloucester, who was passing through to Lake Rukwa on a lion hunt.

Igalula, or St. Moritz Mission, is one of the many institutions conducted by the White Fathers that are scattered over Central and Northern Africa. The first was established at Tabora about 1872, at a time when European settlement was looked on with extreme disfavour by the slave-trading Arabs who over-ran the country. In those days the missionaries experienced a great deal of trouble with the slavers, and each mission had, of necessity, to keep a force of soldiers as a protective measure. Igalula was established in 1902, the Father Superior being a German named Hörner. During the Great War, the calm and seclusion of the mission was rudely disturbed. First the Germans, retreating from the British forces, slaughtered 450 of their valuable cattle, and many sheep and goats, to prevent them from falling into our hands. Then Father Hörner—our venerable host—was interned by the British, being sent first to Egypt, then to Bombay, and later to Rhodesia. Another of our hosts, Brother Keiling, being an Alsatian, and therefore, a then German subject, was also sent to Rhodesia. At the conclusion of hostilities they returned, and with Frère Arsène, had carried on with their work ever since.

With their long beards and white robes, the White Fathers appear to belong to the Old World, and seem out of place in Central Africa. Their work has borne fruit, however, and thousands of natives have been converted to the Catholic faith in the 28 years that the Mission has been established. They live very soberly, adhering to a monkish routine in their daily lives, subsisting on the plainest fare, and permitting themselves no luxuries. Their rude cell-like rooms are bare of all creature comforts. They made us very welcome, however, and proved quite jovial company. Father Hörner—a very old man—was suffering from malaria and could not join us at table, but Frère Arsène and his German brother were a light-hearted pair, and although they spoke very little English, time passed very agreeably in their lively company. At the expressed wish of the old Father a packet of cigarettes, which had not been produced since the visit of the hunting Duke, were brought forth, and although I, sensing that further supplies would be unobtainable out there, assured them that I still had a supply of my own, they insisted that while we were with them we must smoke theirs. It was a very touching act of hospitality.

We were held up next day waiting for porters. Father Hörner, although very weak and ill, insisted on leaving his room and exerting his influence on the natives, in an endeavour to obtain porters. Carrying through famine country was not to the liking of the natives, however, and the venerable Father was forced to admit that the days when natives accepted a request from their spiritual advisers as a command had gone for ever. He deplored the fact that the more one did to improve the lot of the native, the less they were prepared to do in return. He reluctantly admitted that his long years of toil amongst them had failed to arouse in them any deep sense of gratitude. It is a fact that natives have very little sense of gratitude at all.

Had it not been for the kind offices of Father Hörner we would never have secured porters at that spot, but the good man exerted his authority to some effect, and at the end of our second day's stay at the mission six boys were roped in to carry for us as far as Mbeya Boma, an administrative outpost, beyond the mountains which rise above the limits of the plain, some twenty miles beyond the mission.

CHAPTER XI

TANGANYIKA'S WILDS

IN THE HIGHLANDS—CAUGHT BY FLOODS—FIGHTING THE TORRENTS
—A DISCONSOLATE WAYFARER—NATIVES AT SCHOOL—AN NGOMA—
IRINGA—SAPI MKWAWA—ACROSS THE RUAHA—UMBASHI ON POLY-
GAMY—DODOMA TO KONDOA—IRANGI—ON THE GAME PLAINS—A
CIRCUS OF THE WILDS—IN MASAI-LAND—MAJESTIC KILIMANJARO

CLIMATIC and scenic changes occur with remarkable suddenness in Africa. One day a foot *safari* may be trudging across a dusty, desolate plain under a blistering sun, parched for water, and wearied by the utter monotony of the unchanging scenery through which it has been passing for weeks. In one afternoon, following a stiff climb to the heights, a new world may be entered where rushing streams, verdant mountain slopes and deep forest glades refresh the travellers' jaded senses, and promise endless days of pleasant travelling.

So it proved when we left the Rukwa country, and climbed all through one long day into the fertile southern highlands of Tanganyika. In that single day's march, we left the plain entirely behind and found ourselves in a country of cloud-wreathed mountains, rich coffee lands, undulating pastures and running streams—one of the most productive and healthy districts of all Tanganyika Territory. White settlement, although not extensive at that time, was well established, and promised to extend rapidly. The planters whose acquaintance we made in the highlands are convinced that it is only the lack of communication with the railway system of Central Tanganyika, and the coast, that has kept back an inrush of white



Our Camp at the edge of the Karohi Desert



Lumbumbashi and his "Kitchen" on the Desert.



Trekking across the Desert



Rendille Tribesmen Camped at the Foot of Mt Kulal

settlers seeking to reap the potential riches of that fertile region.

At Mbeya, the District Officer warned us that all the country ahead would not be as pleasant as the glorious mountainous region around the Boma. He said that further north the natives, like their brethren on the Rukwa plains, were also suffering from the lateness of the rains, and food for our carriers would be almost unprocurable. We would descend very shortly after leaving Mbeya, he told us, to the Buhora Flats, which were in the grip of a drought, and, in between rivers, quite waterless. Acting on his advice we took an extra supply of maize, and prepared for a further span of thirsty days. We were nearly drowned in those Flats. From Chief Nwirire's village on the southern limit of the Flats to the Mborali River, on the northern boundary, all the rivers were in high flood, and the country in between was waist high in water. It was with difficulty, at the end of long days of wading against the force of a swirling flood, that we found elevated patches of ground on which to sleep. Compared with the Rukwa country the Buhora Flats was a land of plenty, and when we arrived at the end of our journey across them, we were still carrying the maize which we had brought from Mbeya.

There are few occupations more tiring than wading day after day through deep water. Our troubles were increased by the slippery nature of the soil over which the waters flowed, and the boys were hard put to it to keep their footing. We went in hourly expectation of seeing our precious baggage go down in the flood. We had to guess when we were approaching the beds of the rivers, for there was little, beyond the line of trees along the banks, to indicate their course across the flooded countryside. There was always the fear, too, that one or other of us would plunge into a torrent and be swept away before the rush of red, foam-lashed waters. Bridges had all been swept away, and the only means of crossing the streams was by

searching out the destroyed frameworks left when the main body of the bridges were swept away, and proceeding carefully inch by inch across a crazy beam, or torn-up tree trunk, that held more or less firmly against the flimsy supports.

Naturally the boys demurred at having to carry across such country, and we had almost to drive them on. Several did desert whenever a village, perched on the high land above the floods, was reached, and we suffered long delays while the unwilling chieftains pressed substitutes into service.

Wild fowl and plump geese were plentiful, though the game had fled before the flood waters, to the distant hills. During the five days that we were crossing the worst of the flooded country we subsisted on rice and wild fowl, for all root crops and vegetables had been swept away by the waters, and the natives had only their stored supplies of maize in the way of food.

At the end of the fifth day's wading we came to the Mborali River, and found it a torrent about 70 yards wide, and a few inches under six feet deep. There was no bridge of any description, and there was nothing for it but to chance the flood and wade across. There was a village on the bank, and several of the taller men of the village, through long practice, were expert at carrying loads across against the swirling rush of water. We engaged several of them, who took over our porters' loads, and, plunging down the steep bank without hesitation, entered the stream, which raced over their shoulders and reached to their chins, gaining the other bank in an amazingly short space of time.

When all our baggage was safely transported to the far bank Jim and I stripped, and balancing our rifles and clothes on our heads, in order to weight us down we entered the water. No sooner had we done so than we realised that the simplicity with which the natives had made the crossing was more apparent than

real. We had taken but a few steps when the full force of the current struck us and for the next few minutes it was a stern tussle to keep a foothold on the bottom. As we advanced towards the centre of the stream and the water swirled up around our heads we were forced to fight desperately to withstand torrent. Clawing wildly at the sharp rocks on the river bottom with our toes, we fought our way on, inch by inch, and were almost exhausted before two-thirds of the distance was covered. How we managed to reach the far bank was something of a miracle, and we were devoutly thankful when we dug our toes into the soft mud of the slippery sloping bank. It was then that disaster nearly overtook me, for, as I was clambering out, I slipped, shot down the slope, and was only saved from sliding back into the river by the timely action of one of the natives, who hauled me to safety as I reached the brink. There remained still our porters to be brought across, and as several of them could not swim, they hesitated to enter the water. The wading experts who had dealt with our luggage reassured them and aided them across, one of the fellows allowing two frightened boys to cling to his neck as he made the hazardous passage. After our own experience we realised just how difficult was his feat, yet he managed it with apparent ease.

Umbashi, who ever proud of his position of capita, had lost no opportunity of impressing the menial porters with recitals of his prowess, was still on the far bank, when all the others had been hauled to safety. He stood surveying the racing river for a long time endeavouring to appear at ease, but the knowledge that he could not swim must have shaken his confidence for he was in no hurry to brave the waters. To our shouted suggestion that he should jump in and try his luck he returned a nonchalant "Bimeby!" wrapped his dilapidated shorts and shirt around his head, turban fashion, and taking the walking stick,

without which he never moved, advanced in a lordly manner down the slope, he waded to an islet, about half way across, and then waited for the village stalwarts to assist him across the worst of the flood.

A few miles further the Ruaha River also in flood barred our passage, but we found a shallow drift and crossed without difficulty. A party of engineers and mining experts who had come down from Dodoma to inspect the Lupa River gold-diggings, near Mbeya, had reached the drift a little before us, and had attempted to cross with two motor cars. One motor car was in the centre of the stream and being hauled across by a hundred or so yelling natives. On the other side of the river the second car had stopped short at the edge of a high steep bank. Beside it stood a little Greek ruefully surveying the flooded river. We advised the party of the nature of the country that lay ahead of them but they said they would take their chance for they were intent on getting to the diggings, and felt convinced that they would be able, with the assistance of the natives, to drag the cars through. As they had been several hours in crossing the first obstacle, which was the least of those they would have to surmount, we very much doubted if they would achieve their aim, but as they were not to be dissuaded, we passed to the far bank and prepared to continue on our way. The little Greek had caught some of our description of the conditions prevailing in the Buhora Flats and he stopped us, and questioned us further. He then confided to us that he owned that car that had yet to attempt the crossing of the stream. He appeared fearful of the possible damage it would suffer if the mining men who had hired it persisted in going on. Finally he intimated to the leader of the party that he would not allow his car to proceed farther. That mining man was not one to be thwarted. He drew out a cheque book, and bought the car on the spot. The little Greek appeared greatly relieved, and swore that though his car was going on, he cer-

tainly was not. He asked permission to accompany us back to Malangali where he would be able to obtain transport to take him to Dodoma, on the railway. We readily agreed.

The situation as far as the poor Greek was concerned was not without the element of the comic, for he looked little adapted for walking. It was a blazing hot day and he had 30 miles to go. It was then late afternoon, and before we had gone far the heat caused our new-found companion to droop visibly. His footsteps lagged, and he besought us after a mile or two to stay awhile and rest. We obliged. After another mile he removed his coat. At the end of five miles he was muttering to himself, "Oh, why did I sell my car! Oh, why did I sell my car?" A little further and he made anxious enquiries as to how far we still had to go. When we told him he had done a mere eight miles he almost collapsed, and swore that our reckoning was out. We assured him that it was not and attempted to console him by saying that we would do only a further six miles and then camp for the night, but the mention of six miles only drew unhappy groans from the poor fellow. It seemed to get hotter and hotter as we walked and although we had slowed down to a snail's pace, the little fellow found it all that he could do to move one foot after the other. After a while he begged us to leave him, saying he would lie down and rest, and follow us in next morning. We urged him to continue, but having reached a shady tree he threw himself down and said he would not move another yard. We rested with him a while and his spirits gradually revived. At length he asked us if we could drink a bottle of beer. We replied feelingly that we could, but the question seemed pointless, as the nearest hotel was hundreds of miles away. Calling a boy whom he had engaged to carry his few belongings, to him, he delved around in his pack and produced a bottle of German beer! I felt my eyes popping from my head. If ever man deserved canonisation that little

Greek did. Although, because of the heat and the shaking it had received, it was little more than froth, that beer tasted to us like nectar. We drained it between us until not even a speck of froth remained.

Ten minutes later thunder started to rumble, clouds massed up, the sun disappeared, a cold wind sprang up, and down came the rain. The dusty track was turned, in the space of a few minutes, to a quagmire, and we were drenched to the skin. The cold wind chilled us to the bone, and we found it impossible to recall that a little earlier we had been trudging along in the heat of an extremely hot day. A blazing fire appeared at that moment to be the most desirable thing on earth. As some of our boys had gone on ahead to a village where we had intended camping, we had to leave our friend, and push on to prepare a camp before darkness set in. Umbashi, whom we left to walk with our distressed fellow-traveller, arrived in at camp about half an hour afterwards. He appeared greatly amused by something or other, and chuckled frequently as he busied himself about his camp duties. When we enquired what the joke was, the heartless heathen doubled up with mirth. He managed to jerk out "*Piccanin Bwana—lala lapa lo mgogwa—meninge mie!*" (the little master—sleeping on the road—lots of water). Further questioning elicited the fact that in the course of the last four miles to the camp, the poor little Greek had found the journey too much for him, and had gone to sleep on the wet track, the rain pouring down on him. We reprimanded Umbashi, but that worthy was too tickled by the picture he had in his mind of a white man going to sleep in a pool of water, when camp was so near at hand, that our reproofs went unheeded. The distressed wayfarer arrived in as we were preparing supper, threw himself down on a bamboo bench in the rest house, and said he was going to stay where he lay until the morning. It was with difficulty that we could rouse him sufficiently to share in our meal. We made up a bed for

him and left him to sleep off his weariness. At intervals through the night we could hear him groaning and tossing restlessly, and knew he was walking those fifteen weary miles over again. Next morning he was much refreshed, and we set off together for Malangali. He went along fairly well until half of the distance had been covered, when he lay down beside a stream and said he would complete the journey in the evening. We left him there, and reached Malangali at 1 p.m.

At Malangali there is a comfortable Government European rest-camp, and a big native school. We installed ourselves in the rest-camp, paid off our porters, and went across to the school. The Principal, Mr. W. E. Mumford, a son of the eminent Child Psychologist, Edith Baker Mumford, and her no less famous husband, was absent in Iringa, a township between Malangali and Dodoma, but his assistant, Mr. G. G. Brown, one time lecturer in Psychology at the Toronto University, was at home, and he invited us to lunch with him and his wife, and later showed us over the school. The school, which had been opened just over a year before, had over one hundred pupils, mostly the sons of chiefs of the Mbeya, Iringa, Ufipa and neighbouring native districts. They are taught agriculture, dairying, English, geography, and many other subjects, but the paramount aim is to prepare them for their future as enlightened rulers of their tribes.

A departure from the lines of missionary education, formerly the only large-scale class of native instruction carried on in Africa, is followed at the Malangali school. It is aimed at the preservation of tribal identity, and the continuance of individual tribal customs, life and conventions. With that end in view all the representatives of the various tribes attending the school, the Wahehe, the Wabeni, the Wasangu, the Wakinga and the Wanyamwanga are kept as far as possible in their own tribal groups. They sit at the same table, each tribe has its own dormitory, the

chief's son in each acting as the leader, or school prefect, of his own tribal group. Each tribe has its tribal elder, selected by the chief, who stays at the school and instructs his charges in tribal practices, rites and observances. Tribal pride is cultivated by means of various kinds of friendly inter-tribal contests, such as dances and displays of native-work.

Our Greek friend limped into Malangali late that afternoon, and swore that he was going to stay there for ever, unless some form of conveyance arrived to take him on to Dodoma. Before we resumed our march he had made arrangements with a sub-chief of the Wahehe, who was possessed of a motor truck—many African chiefs are rich men and own, in some cases very good motor cars—to take him to his destination.

Steady strenuous marching through pleasant upland scenery brought us, four days later, to Iringa, an important British settlement 150 miles south of the Central Tanganyika railway, running from Dar-es-Salaam to Kigoma, the first township of any size we had seen since leaving Elizabethville. Iringa clusters around a solidly built, white-walled fortress, erected by the Germans during their campaign against the Wahehe in 1905.

Through the crowded market place we went, a rather disreputable-looking pair, leading in a string of more direputable-looking carriers, up to the gateway of the fort. Passing the rough pile of stones erected by the Germans to commemorate the sacrifice of the Swahili askari who died in the fighting against the Wahehe, we came to a sentry box, where a smart, very soldier-like corporal of the King's African Rifles saluted us, and, in reply to our enquiry, conducted us to the Boma, where Mr. Callaghan, the Assistant District Officer, a genial, obliging official, promised to obtain us boys for the next stage to Dodoma. He introduced us to the Provincial Commissioner, Mr. R. A. Thompson, who greeted us very cordially, and forthwith invited us to join him and his wife at dinner

in the evening, an invitation we gladly accepted, as we rarely enjoyed the privilege of the society of Europeans during that march.

At Iringa we made the acquaintance of Colonel Hoy, Lord Delamere's agent in Tanganyika, a Canadian, who commanded for a time the first Cape Coloured Corps, which he helped to raise, during the East African campaign. He takes a keen interest in British settlement matters in the Mandate, and at his suggestion we accompanied him on a motor run to the Dabaga Highlands, thirty miles south-east of Iringa. That district he considered one of the finest in the Territory, and we were naturally very interested to inspect it. The run was through some of the most beautiful mountain country we had seen. Climbing to about 8,000 feet through undulating upland pastures, and dense rain-forests, we reached the farm of a German, Herr Hauter, who was the Government Agricultural Officer in German East Africa in 1900-1, and who was on General von Lettow's staff during the East African campaign. Incidentally both he and Colonel Hoy had been wounded in the same engagement during that campaign.

In that elevated region where bracken ferns grow, Hauter successfully cultivates wheat, barley, oats, tea, coffee and tobacco, though much of his endeavour is still in the experimental stage. He had also started sheep rearing with a small flock of Romney Marsh, brought down from Kenya, and went in a great deal for cattle and pig raising. In addition, there is a sawmill on the property, where camphor and other woods from the forests are cut and planked. Hauter was a convivial host, and that visit was memorable in more respects than one. The future of that district would seem to be assured if communications with the coast are established. The run back to Iringa afforded us an illustration of one difficulty with which settlers in that area would have to contend. Although we had skid chains on the car wheels, it was a matter of

touch and go whether we got through without mishap, as the heavy rain which had been falling since leaving Iringa, had rendered the terrifically steep road almost impassable.

Back in Iringa, the Colonel introduced us to his very charming wife and daughter, and around the fireside that night we enjoyed a very pleasant interlude, as Hoy, who was a first-rate raconteur, had a fund of hunting, soldiering and other adventurous tales to tell. It was with real regret that we finally took leave of our Iringa friends, and turned our faces towards Dodoma. The air was fresh and cool in the highlands, and walking was extremely pleasant, game of all descriptions abounded, for we were on the fringe of a reserve, and as we advanced through fresh green forest country, by many a stream and delightful valley, we sighted herds of zebra, impala and gazelle. Monkeys romped through the trees and peered down curiously at us as we passed. Our camping spots by some rushing river or deep forest glade were among the most enjoyable that it had ever been our fortune to select. At night the deep coughing roar of simba, and the eerie hoot of the hyena, was our music. Bird life was plentiful, partridge and guinea-fowl being sighted in exceptionally large numbers.

We were not to enjoy the delights of that vernal paradise for long, however, as our track dipped down to lower levels after some days, and we commenced the crossing of a sterile region, where the scattered palms growing in the dry stony soil served but to enhance the impression that we had reached another desert. The absence of water once more became a problem, and flies were extremely troublesome. Stony ground gave place to black soil, trampled by the passing of innumerable herds of native cattle, into a broken, uneven surface of sunbaked mud. In places it was interspersed with wide stretches of sand, and thorn bush gradually replaced all other forms of vegetation. The villages, inhabited by various Swahili speaking

natives, were filthy, and swarming with flies, which rose in swarms from the untidy cattle kraals. Indescribably dirty children of mixed Arab and Abantu descent grovelled in the dust before their dreary looking mud brick homes, inscribing Arabic characters on wooden tablets with small brushes, or merely idling their time away. Isolated baobab trees, the first sighted since leaving the Limpopo country, were a further evidence of the desert nature of the territory which we had entered. The days grew hotter and hotter; the slightest breeze raised clouds of dust; and when we stopped to eat, the filth and flies that found their way into our food, set us yearning for the highlands again. Through such country we passed, to recross the Ruaha—we had first come on it in far different conditions on the flooded Buhora Flats—and penetrate to an even more sterile region of thorn bush and parched shrubs, where, strangely enough, game was to be seen in ever-increasing quantities. Magnificent giraffe we observed for the first time, just beyond the river, but in the months that followed we saw the striking creatures daily. The plains of Tanganyika and Kenya are their favourite haunts.

Into the waste once more we trekked. Families of baboons, and hundreds upon hundreds of monkeys, scampered out of our way, mothers, with their scared babies riding on their backs, chattering protestingly. We made long stages, owing to the distance between watering places, and crossed the Ruaha plains at the rate of 30 miles a day.

The Gusu thorn was one of the added trials of that journey. In some places the bushes grow so thickly that there is no way of advancing, save by pushing through them, and their wicked hooked thorns lacerate the flesh terribly. It does not pay to hurry through such places. Frequently in the excitement of a chase after game, we would be reminded of the fact, as a curving hooked thorn sank deep into the lobe of an ear, or the soft flesh of the cheek, and we

would be drawn back, dripping blood. Our clothing was in tatters before we reached Dodoma.

On reaching a pool late one afternoon, Umbashi surveyed a couple of comely native maidens who were performing their ablutions there, in a thoughtful manner for a few moments, and then remarked—*"Bardo mena funya £5 na tenga bibi. Eco mazuri sana"*. ("Soon I want £5 to buy a wife. It will be very good"). I remarked that £5, was a lot of money for a native to spend for such a purpose.

He replied that later, when his earnings amounted to £10, he would purchase two wives. He then told us that he already had one. We asked him if he would not be likely to find three wives an embarrassment. He explained that a native never keeps his wives in the one establishment, but keeps them apart. He said the arrangement worked well, as they could not quarrel.

Dodoma was reached on April 19th. It being on a railway, we had high hopes of obtaining home mail—we had had no letters since leaving the Congo 2½ months before—but we were to be disappointed. It is strange how the sorrowful shake of a postal clerk's head in answer to a simple enquiry can cast men down. We were cast down that day, and it was some time before even the delights of a sojourn in civilisation revived our drooping spirits. By very good fortune we ran across one of our own countrymen in Dodoma, Dr. E. O. Teale, Chief of the Tanganyika geological survey.

The geniality of the Doctor, and the welcome he accorded us, assisted materially in heartening two very disappointed travellers. One of his staff, Dr. D. R. Grantham, proved most hospitable, placing a house that had just been completed for him, but which he had not then moved into, at our disposal during our stay of two and a half days. It was the first time we had lived in a house for many, many months, and we enjoyed the experience greatly. We employed the time while there attending to the accumulation of necessary repairs to our kit.

One little job which occupied me for some time was the removal of a nest of termites from my helmet. In the course of the last few days of the trek to Dodoma, I had been puzzled by a continuous trickle of dust and rubble, that kept falling from the crown of my head and down my neck. Every few miles or so I found it necessary to brush quite a quantity from my hair, but the supply appeared seemingly inexhaustible, and I began to experience a fear that my skull was being attacked by some pests. Alarm, not unmingled with a certain feeling of wounded pride, took possession of me, when on removing a supply of the refuse from my hair, I discovered several white ants among it. The African termite has been known to act in most peculiar ways, taking his search for cellulose tissue (his sole food) into all manner of queer places, but never before, save from the mouths of puerile humorists, had I heard of them seeking their sustenance on a human head. That I should be the first victim of such an attack was humiliating to a degree. It came as a shock to discover that cellulose, or any other woody material, formed a part of the composition of my skull. It was with something of a relief, therefore, that, on chancing to look into my helmet, I discovered that it was merely my head covering, that had been attacked. The little pests had crawled through the air hole in the crown, while my helmet was lying under my stretcher one night, and had eaten their way deeply down through the thick material, and their work went on busily as I marched along. For the whole of the time we were in Dodoma, I was kept busy shaking the invaders from their strange nest, and it was not until I had exterminated several score of them that the depreciation of my cherished head-gear ceased.

Our route from Dodoma lay due north through the Territory, through Kondoa-Irangi to Kilimanjaro, and so across the border into Kenya.

On leaving Dodoma we encountered natives quite distinct in facial characteristics, dress, and mode of living, from any other Abantu peoples we had met. They

were the Wagogo, a tributary tribe of the famous Masai warrior people. They are lighter in colour, have more sharply-defined features, and are generally more handsome than the usual type of Abantu met further south. The men daub their faces with a brick red woad, and mat their hair with the same substance. During their bachelor stage the young bloods wear their hair in a pigtail, formed by kneading the red mud into strands of hair drawn tightly into a braid at the back of their heads. Others draw the pigtail from the back, near the nape of the neck, over the crown of their heads, and wear it jutting out in front. From a distance they appear to be wearing a helmet surmounted by a casque. The rough cloth robe, that is their sole garment, is also dyed a brick red colour, and the numerous arm, neck, and leg ornaments they wear, are stained the same colour. They are veritable Red Men. Cattle-rearing is almost their only occupation, and each village has its hundreds, and in some cases thousands, of head of hump-back cattle, despite the ravages of the deadly East Coast fever, which, it is computed, carries off 7 per cent of the calves.

The journey to Kondoa-Irangi provided us with many opportunities for hunting, for game of all kinds, was plentiful, a particularly acceptable addition to our diet being pork, for wild pigs were met with frequently. At Kondoa-Irangi, we occupied a rather historic little rest hut, that was placed at our disposal by the District Officer, a Mr. Barnes. Its previous occupant was the Prince of Wales, who, having come in from a hunting trip near Babati, further out in the blue, was resting there when news was brought him of the King's illness. It was at that point that he abandoned his first African hunting expedition, and began his rapid dash back home to England.

Seven miles beyond Kondoa-Irangi the country falls away rapidly, and one descends to a wide, flat plain that stretches north to the Kenya border, and from which the mighty mass of Kilimanjaro, Mount Arusha,

Ol Lokisale, Ol Rukuman, and Masai mountains rise. It is the Mbugwe, or black cotton-soil country. We dropped down from the plateau to the plain level by a goat path, and came on the camps of Messrs. Bax and Thompson, two young scientists engaged in tsetse fly research. Itundwe camp, where they had been engaged for some months, making their investigations, was a lonely spot, and they were very pleased to make the acquaintance of two of their fellows. The Mbugwe is infested with the fly, and the Tanganyika Government has established several camps across it, in order to discover means by which the pest can be exterminated. Their work includes the collection and classification of all shrubs, soils, insects and plants that are found in the tsetse areas, the object being to discover what natural conditions are necessary to the existence of the fly, and by classifying them, arriving at a full knowledge of the problem in hand—the first step towards overcoming it. The work is being done very thoroughly.

Rhino, elephants and lions roam in large numbers across the black soil plain—one of the research workers bagged a fine rhino, his second for the week, the day we arrived—and we had high hopes of falling in with some of the elusive beasts before long. At the next camp we visited, one of the young fellows related how on the previous day he had walked unexpectedly to within a few yards of a family of nine lions, but though those beasts were obviously numerous, we sighted not one of them in our journey across that area.

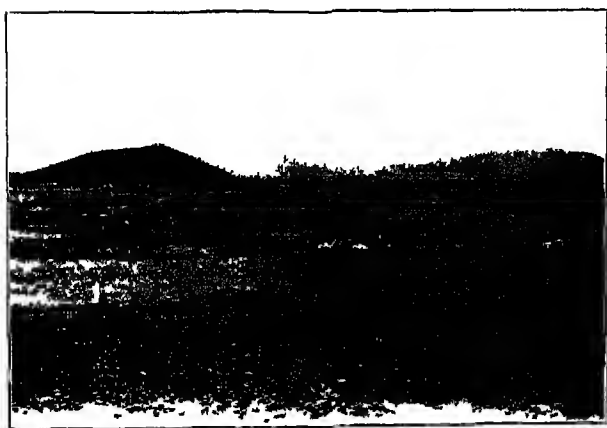
After leaving the worst of the tsetse area behind, however, other game was plentiful and a day's march southwest of Arusha, on the fringe of the great Masai reserve, we saw game in quantities that few travellers, even in that animal paradise, have had the privilege of witnessing. We had reached water after a long day's tramp without it, and camped by its edge. The next morning, as our porters were gathering up our loads for the day's trek, Wilson and I moved up the slope of a long, low ridge, rising from the river pools by our camp, to

discover what might be moving on the flats beyond. Presently we saw a strange spectacle.

It seemed as if the ridge ahead were rimmed with thousands of spears, that were bobbing up and down, suggesting an army of hidden warriors marching in mass formation across the plain beyond the rise, with their spears resting on their shoulders, so that the points were just visible. We could scarcely believe our eyes, for unless the Masai had suddenly reverted to their war-like habits, there appeared to be nothing to explain that sea of rising and falling spear-points. There was something uncanny about it all, for not a living thing was visible, and yet it was obvious that moving hordes were on the level plain beyond the ridge, and just out of our line of vision. Feeling far from sure that it would not be wiser to retreat, we quickened our pace up the slope, urged on by an irresistible curiosity. Soon the phenomenon was explained. We caught sight of thousands of bobbing heads, each surmounted by a pair of upturned horns. Countless herds of wildebeeste (gnu), and kongoni, were travelling slowly across the plains in the direction of a series of pools some distance from our camp. The plain was black with them, and they were accompanied by great herds of many other species of game. Beyond those moving hordes lay a second ridge, and from our elevation we could see that the dip behind it was also packed with animals, coming in from the surrounding country for their morning drink. There were zebra in groups of hundreds—a brave show, with the morning sunlight falling on their glossy coats—scores and scores of handsome-headed impala, two or three magnificent giraffe, the sentinels of the wilds, standing in lordly isolation of the far limits of the moving herds, and troop upon troop of Thompson's gazelle, frolicking back and forth across the plain, having apparently already been to the water. Bird life, too, was represented. There were numbers of ostriches, their magnificent black and white plumes ruffling in the breeze as they moved, wild turkeys and other members of the



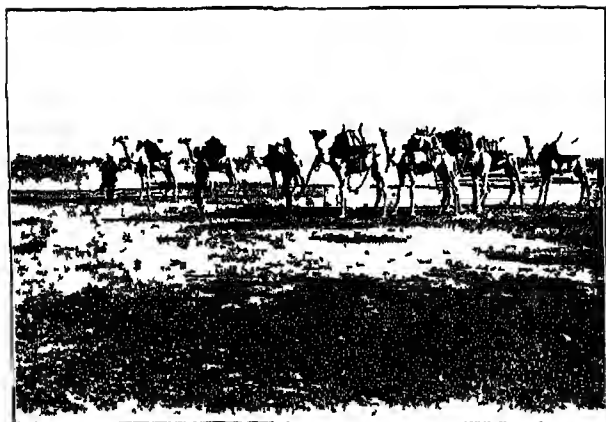
Rendille Tribesmen Visiting our Camp



A Rendille *Manyatta* : Seiruma Waterhole.



Baby Camels in a Rendille Village.



On the South Shore of Lake Rudolph.

greater bustard tribe; guinea-fowl and partridge—a wondrous show. All save the zebra and the wildebeeste retreated to the dead ground behind the distant ridge as we came on.

The giraffe were first to move, lumbering off at a rapid pace in their clumsy lurching gait. The others turned close on their heels. Gazelle flew across the turf, the broad, horizontal, white stripes on their red bodies giving them a phantom appearance as they fled. Hartbeeste (kongoni) cantered clumsily off. Impala followed, stretching out at every bound, until their bellies seemed to touch the earth, and ostrich moved in effortless style, yet with the speed of the wind.

At our nearer approach the wildebeeste moved to a distance, tossing their shaggy heads, and switching their tufted tails with a show of decidedly bad temper. The zebra halted, and stared at us curiously. Their foals, pretty little chaps that would have melted the hearts of the most ruthless animal-slayers with their antics, scurried for the protection of the maternal presence. Then the whole herd, or rather groups of herds, began to circle. For an hour we watched them as they galloped round us, the whole plain shaking to the thunder of their hooves. Never had we seen such a glorious display, and never do we hope to see its like again. Counting the groups, and averaging the numbers in each, we calculated that there were 2,500 of them, and each of those beautiful black and white bodies had their stripings arranged in a slightly different pattern—a fact that is not generally known, but which we observed that memorable morning.

One moonless night we reached the first of the torrents that tumble down from Kilimanjaro's ice-dome, and threw ourselves down to sleep by its edge, after drinking deeply of its ice-cold waters. All through the long hot day, and well into the night, we had toiled across the barren wastes of the reserve, without having once been able to wash the dust from our parched throats, and we were just about "all in".

There was a patter of rushing feet, a loud chorus of yells, and a horde of half-naked savages, carrying long broad-bladed spears, and huge ox-hide shields, broke in on our camp. As they came by the spot where we were lying, they opened out, and went past performing all manner of weird contortions, keeping up a howling, and imitating the cry of the hyena, as they leaped and pranced. We caught a glimpse of several lion-mane head-dresses, and recognised the disturbers as Masai moran, or warriors. They were apparently engaged in a mimic night raid, for since the British administration has put an end to the real thing, the young bloods must find some methods of exercising their pent-up energies. Be that as it may, it was an unpardonable act of insolence for natives to burst in on a European's camp in such a manner, but it was typical of the Masai lack of respect for all men.

When the Germans were colonising German-East, the Masai, like the Wahehe, gave a great deal of trouble, and several bloody battles were fought against them. The English were more fortunate in their dealings with them, and had scarcely any trouble at all. During the Great War the Kenya Masai did good service as scouts along the border.

We left Arusha with a band of Warusha carriers, the only boys obtainable for the work in that part of the country, as the Masai resolutely refuse to engage in such a menial occupation. In truth they will engage in no occupation save their own, under any consideration. It may be pride; it may be sheer laziness—opinions differ as to the reason. The Warusha, conquered by the Masai in the course of several sanguinary raids in the past, in these days mostly claim to be Masai themselves. Those whom we engaged showed all the Masai's dislike of, and inability to carry, loads.

Leaving the base of Meru Mountain, which towers above Arusha township, we began a long waterless stage to Moshi, at the base of Kilimanjaro. We

had advanced but a mile or two across the dusty plain between the two mountains, when we came on a party of natives lying in the shade of the last trees fringing the plain. They were apparently exhausted, and when our boys spoke with them, they volunteered the information that they had arrived from Moshi about an hour before, having walked through the night. There was not a drop of water to be had across the whole length of the plain. That did it! Our carriers, poor specimens indeed, had all the stomach for the task knocked out of them—and they had to make the crossing in the heat of the day.

Their pace slowed to a crawl from the start. They wanted to rest frequently, and mid-day found us, parched, hot and dusty, with scarce a third of the distance covered. We had only a drop of water left in our bottles, as, at one halting place, a couple of the wretched porters had stolen the greater quantity of it. We ourselves, had, up to that stage, refrained from drinking at all, and at the pace the boys were making we were faced with a walk that must last throughout the day, and well on into the night. It was an unhappy prospect. Late that afternoon we trudged through the powder-dry dust of the featureless plain and stared with longing towards the dense cloud banks that came almost down to the plain level many miles ahead. Behind them, we knew that Africa's mightiest mountain, 20,000-feet-Kilimanjaro, with its perpetual snows and its pleasant streams, lay hidden, but, strain as we would, we were unable to penetrate the cloud masses that shut it from view. Then about 3 p.m. the draperies were wafted away, and the sublimest pinnacle of that equatorial monarch—ice-domed Kibo, the highest peak of Africa—towering above its more rugged crag, Muwenzí, burst on our vision 25 miles away. Heat, thirst, and the weary miles ahead were forgotten as we gazed. Kibo, serene, majestic Kibo, turning back the fierce rays of the tropic sun from its equatorial snows, held us in

thrall. Other mountains—considerable masses—rise from the black soil plain, yet they were dwarfed, overshadowed, diminished, by the awful majesty of incomparable Kibo. The gleaming whiteness of its unstained snows, their dazzling brightness, intensified by the 80-foot ice-crust shining through, its enormous, yet rudely symmetrical bulk, its magnificent isolation, and its grandeur, set it apart from all other mountains. We stood in audience in the wilderness below, gazing across at the snows that suns of countless ages have failed to melt. As we stood Time itself slipped away, for Kilimanjaro is symbolic of all that is fixed and immutable in nature. Its splendour has remained undimmed, unaltered since first the fires of Kibo went cold, and the last thunderous rumble shook its mighty heart. It has taken no count of the passage of centuries, and stands now as it stood when the eyes of peoples, vanished from the earth æons since, first gazed upon it. The clouds rolled upwards as we stood, until only the topmost arch of the dome remained revealed. Soon it, too, was enveloped by the billowing mist curtain—our audience was over.

We still had many miles to go to water, and our boys were lagging along at a painful pace. We passed over a saddle-back ridge, and then the sun slipped down behind Mount Meru, in our rear, in a blaze of golden splendour. Cloud wreaths about Kilimanjaro flushed pink, Kibo's gleaming dome peeped out once more, and then twilight descended on mountain and plain, suffusing all in purple shadow. A herd of zebra thundered by, heading towards the mountain's slope. Behind us Meru's towering bulk stood out stark and rugged against the darkening sky. Hyenas commenced their hooting, a cold breeze sprang up, wafting to our nostrils the heavy barn-yard scents from a dip in the plain, in which restless zebra herds were feeding, and night was come upon us.

On through the inky darkness we trudged, stumbling over the loose stones which now were scattered across

our way. Several times the boys fell with their loads, and it needed all our exhortations to urge them to rise. At length one boy went down, and lay where he fell, declaring he could go no further. Jim and I took turns in carrying his load, and left him to struggle on as best he could. We were all suffering greatly from thirst.

At 9 o'clock we heard the glorious sound of bubbling water, and a few minutes later were at the edge of the torrent where we encountered the sky-larking Masai imitating a hyena-pack on the prowl.

We were then at Kilimanjaro's base, and on the following morning left the dry plain country behind, and entered on a stream-fed oasis where tropical vegetation flourished. The country below Kilimanjaro is a veritable garden, where coffee, bananas, and native cereals flourish, and jungle forests clothe the mountain side, and run for several miles out on to the plains. After our dreary tramp of the previous day, the march into Moshi was for us a succession of endless delights. Gorgeous blooms hung from every shrub and creeper, mighty trunks, festooned with lush growths, raised umbrageous heads high above the verdant walls of mighty gorges, at the foot of which their roots were planted, and down which ice-cold waters bubbled. In the banana groves, the closely-growing plants bowed beneath the weight of their huge bunches of green and golden fruit. By old stone bridges we crossed foaming cascades, hurrying down from the mountains through gorges sixty, seventy and eighty feet deep. Birds of gaudy plumage poured out their golden notes from every thicket; squirrels scurried across in front of us; natives, burdened with the products of their fruitful shambas, passed up in twos and threes, or stopped, importuning us to buy oranges or bananas at absurdly low prices. Nature has richly endowed that pleasant district, where roses grow as thickly as in an English garden. After strolling for ten miles through the heart of all that loveliness, we

came to a ravine of matchless beauty, spanned by a solid, old-world bridge of stone. Rough-hewn steps lead down from the road to a stream a hundred feet below, and by its edge we lighted our fire and had a picnic lunch in the most delightful surroundings imaginable. On again, up ravines and down, through veritable jungle, we went for nine miles more, crossing a remarkably fine sample of German engineering, in the form of a huge suspension bridge. Through numerous coffee plantations, threatened unfortunately by clouds of locusts, we passed, to reach Moshi early in the afternoon. Somewhat smaller than Arusha, Moshi is yet in many respects a replica of her sister-township, and like Arusha, owes its existence to the mountain behind it.

CHAPTER XII

CARRYING PACKS TO KIBO

ON THE LOWER SLOPES—AUGUSTANA MISSION—A COSSACK IN A
CASSOCK—THE ASCENT—SUNSET IN CLOUDLAND—LOST—NIGHT ON
THE MOUNTAINS—GLORIOUS KIBO—DISAPPOINTMENT—HARD CLIMB-
ING—THE RETURN IN THE DARKNESS—AN AFRICAN SCHOOLMASTER—
PARCHED PLAINS—WE ACT AS PORTERS—LONGIDO, AND THE KENYA
BORDER

WE DECIDED to remain for several days in the vicinity in order to make an attempt on the summit of Kili-manjaro, and Mr. Dawkins, the District Officer, obligingly placed the rondavels attached to the Government Boma at our disposal. We spent one morning making enquiries relating to the task ahead of us and in the afternoon were motored by Dawkins as far as Old Moshi, some distance up the lower slopes of the mountain. From there we climbed a thousand feet up a track that was so steep that a motor car could not go, to a little Lutheran Mission in charge of Dr. Gotman.

We had decided on attempting the hitherto untried feat of making the ascent unaccompanied by porters or guides, and carrying our own packs. At Moshi we had loaded our haversacks with a blanket, a waterproof sheet, four days' supply of cocoa, rice, oatmeal, tea, milk, sugar, grapenuts, biscuits, soup cubes and matches. I took cigarettes, but beyond those things and the clothes we stood in, we took nothing, for we knew that every extra ounce would tell in the task we had set ourselves. Umbashi volunteered to stay behind and contemplate the glories of the mountain from a comfortable hut with which he had been

provided. Umbashi had his ambitions, but mountaineering was not one of them.

From the very outset, during that climb to the mission, we were made aware of the extraordinarily strenuous nature of the task on which we had embarked. Our packs, despite all our care, were very heavy, and the strain on our muscles during that short climb of 1,000 feet was great. We realised that we were in for the most gruelling four days' march of the whole journey.

Dr. Gotman was somewhat startled when he saw us toiling up the path to his mission, as the sight of Europeans carrying packs in Central Africa is unusual. He told us that, at first glance, he had taken us for soldiers, for he still retained vivid impressions of the days of the Great War, when the serenity of the peaceful mission was rudely disturbed by the arrival of the British forces, and the subsequent internment of the missionaries. Once reassured, however, he won our deepest esteem by his great kindness and hospitality. He was genuinely alarmed when we explained the purpose of our visit, and told him of our intention to scale Kibo unaccompanied. He said that the plan was an impossible one and urged us to abandon it. Finding us resolved, he insisted that we at least vary our original plan of commencing our assault on the summit from his mission, as he asserted that we would surely perish did we attempt it. We agreed finally to cross around the mountain to the Augustana Lutheran Mission, at Marangu, and consult with Dr. Reusch, a Russian, who had been in charge there for some years, and was the foremost authority on Kilimanjaro, living in Africa. He had scaled Kibo on eight occasions, and Mawenzi—an even more difficult feat—twice. Even he, our host told us, had never ventured on the exploit without the company of at least one native.

We slept at the mission that night, turned out in the darkness of the chill hour before the dawn of the following day, dressed, made a hurried breakfast by candle light, and as dawn was breaking, slipped on our packs

and set off on the first stage of our adventure, heading for Marangu.

Kilimanjaro's lower slopes, thickly forested, and deeply furrowed by mighty, palm-filled ravines, were fresh and beautiful in the early morning, and the cold, invigorating air made for ideal walking conditions. We climbed steadily at a good pace for about half an hour, and then fell to the temptation offered by a well worn track, which we took, hoping to cut off some of the distance to the Augustana Mission. We soon found that it was taking us farther and farther away from the road, and deep into the forest, but we kept on, hoping that it would lead back to the path before long. Down steep ravines and up slippery, precipitous slopes we went, getting thoroughly soaked as we pushed through the saturated undergrowth, but found that we were getting no nearer to the line of our original route. At length, after two strenuous miles, the path ceased suddenly, and although we cast about in the forest for a time, we could find no trace of its going further. Chagrined at the loss of valuable time, we turned and retraced our steps, reaching the road again after the loss of nearly an hour. We stuck to the main route after that, and wound for miles through some of the most glorious scenery on earth, for hours. The world about us was fresh and green, waterfalls cascaded from the forested slopes above us, passed under picturesque little bridges, and tumbled down with a roar of waters into gorges far below. Ferns, creepers, spreading palms, gorgeous flowering-shrubs, and leafy forest giants clothed the walls of those ravines with their foliage, and mantled the heights above with a cloak of richest emerald, splashed with colours strikingly varied.

Up and up we climbed, following the zig-zag course of the wet, red road cut in the mountain side. Occasionally we passed native women toiling along the road with enormous bundles of banana-frond thatching material for their huts, balanced on their heads; here and there, we saw conical-shaped native dwellings, perched amid

banana plantations, on the less precipitous slopes of the deep ravines, and we noticed that among those folk, too, the custom prevailed of housing their cattle and goats in their huts.

Towards mid-day we began to descend slightly, and saw before us, over towards the Kenya border, the gleaming surface of bottomless Lake Chala, supposed to be a crater lake, filled and drained through subterranean passages. At length we came to the first European shamba along the route—a coffee plantation run by a Greek, and we then passed by the Kilima Mission, another of the settlements of the Holy Ghost Fathers fraternity. We crossed numberless more torrents, and finally came in sight of the Marangu Hotel. A little beyond that lay the Augustana Mission. When we entered, the principal, Dr. Reusch, was arrayed in a laboratory apron engaged on the task of mounting specimens of gorgeous-hued butterflies. From the description Dr. Gottman had given us of him, we expected a warm welcome, but we were totally unprepared for the spontaneity of the reception we received. We had not had time to introduce ourselves, before we were urged to lay aside our packs and be seated. Leaving his task uncompleted, the doctor hastened to bring us refreshments and cigarettes, and it was not until we were thoroughly at our ease that we were permitted to explain the purpose of our visit. Our host was dumbfounded when he learned that we contemplated pushing ahead that afternoon, taking no guides or porters. He pleaded with us to rest at his home for the night and start on the morrow, taking a guide he promised to procure for us. When we told him we intended sticking to our original plan, he explained the difficult nature of the undertaking, implored us to reconsider our decision, and offered to give us any aid we required. That failing to alter our purpose, he insisted that we at least stay for lunch, and promised to give us a plan of the route to the summit afterwards.

He informed us that he was a retired cavalry officer

—a Caucasian Cossack—and had served throughout the war, before entering the Church. The atrocities committed by the Bolsheviks after the revolution, when thousands of his one-time brother officers were slaughtered in one ghastly massacre, led him to lay aside his priestly robes for a space, and once again take up the sword. His vivid accounts of the horrible sights he witnessed during the ensuing months gave us a new conception of the depths to which human fiends could descend when the blood lust was upon them, and helped us to realise how it could come to pass that a man of war could turn to the peace and solace of religious work. He said that the force to which he allied himself suffered reverse after reverse, until finally he was the sole survivor of his original cavalry regiment. A few swords and pistols, some photographs of his slaughtered comrades, and an irradicable memory of the horror of it all, were all he had retained of the stirring times he had passed through. Since arriving at Kilimanjaro, several years before, he had reached the summit of Kibo and Mawenzi on several occasions, for he is an ardent Alpinist, and one of the greatest authorities—with the possible exception of Professor Karl Meyer, perhaps the greatest—on Kilimanjaro.

After lunch he gave us the plan as promised. We were to go to Bismarck Hut that night, to Peter's Hut the following day and, if possible, go on to the caves near the summit before nightfall. We would have to carry fuel and water to the caves from Peter's, and sleep for the night as best we could in a spot where the temperature was frequently several degrees below zero. On the succeeding morning we must tackle the ice and snow field, climb past the Retzel glacier, and attempt the crowning feat of reaching Gilman's point—where most attempts end—and, if we were still in possession of our strength, and time permitted, achieve the ultimate summit, by passing around the rim of the crater, by Stella point, to Kaiser Wilhelm Spitze—the highest point in all Africa. He said he thought we would be able to

follow his directions, but warned us that there was no other possible route to follow. He then wished us God-speed, and made us promise not to attempt the final climb if the mists were around the summit. We shook hands, lifted our wearying packs once more, and set off at 2.30 p.m. on the 8 mile trek to Bismarck Hut, the key of which our host had obtained for us.

From the mission the path went up sheer—a back-breaking, muscle-tiring climb of several thousands of feet. Despite the grade and the weight of our cruel packs, we plodded upwards at a rapid rate, plunged into a dark forest, where, if anything the path was steeper, and where, after an hour or so, we stopped for a drink of ice-cold water by a torrent that raced through it. On again after that, up and up, the path becoming even more steep as we advanced. How our muscles ached!

Coming out of the forest, sweating profusely and scarcely able to move our legs, we forced ourselves onwards at the same killing pace, until we were so fatigued that every step seemed a labour. Half an hour more of it, and the path went up even still more sharply, so that at length our muscles refused to work, and we subsided into the bracken, unable for a moment or two to advance another step.

On once more after a brief rest, we went, past a pine thicket, and then, to our vast surprise, and unutterable relief, the hut burst on our vision. Never was a haven more welcomed as was that lonely mountain hut by we two utterly wearied travellers. We had reason to congratulate ourselves, too, for we had taken just $2\frac{3}{4}$ hours to achieve a climb that others usually did in 4 hours with porters—and we had had two quarter-hour rests. It was fortunate that we had made such good time, for but a short period of daylight remained, and it would have been almost impossible for us, unfamiliar with the path as we were, to have reached the hut in the darkness. We were bathed in perspiration, and the cold mountain air was having its chilling effect on us, so we

lost no time in unlocking the hut and getting inside. A second door, leading to two inner rooms was jammed, and barred our entry for a time, but we eventually forced it, and soon had a fire going in the slow-combustion stove in the farther room. When we had fully examined our quarters, taken off our shirts and singlets, and set them before the stove to dry, we opened up the wooden shutters of the room and looked out on the world below us.

Never shall I forget that scene. The sun was just setting, flooding the plain of Moshi with red-gold light. All the world below was bathed in the shimmering, lovely colour-rain, that seemed to be filtering down through the mists, like gently falling showers of some ethereal pigment, compounded of golden sunbeams washed with ruby dew.

It was bitterly cold in the hut, but there was a plentiful supply of fuel, and we soon had the stove roaring like a miniature furnace. We ate our supper, spread newspapers on the asphalt floor, laid our blankets and waterproofs over them, and turned in.

From the window of the hut at dawn next day we gazed out on a billowing sea of cloud that rolled but fifty feet or so below us, shutting out from view the mountain's lower slopes, the plain, and even the horizon beyond. We got away as soon as breakfast was over, and, entering a gloomy grey-beard forest that began at the very walls of the hut, commenced the ascent to Peter's Hut.

Arduous going through the forest for three-quarters of an hour brought us to an open belt of coarse elephant grass, where the ascent became less sheer, and from where we obtained a fine, unobstructed view of Kibo and Mawenzi. The sight spurred us on, and we made good progress, hardly feeling the weight of our packs. We were following a well-defined path, and having no difficulty in singling out the hills marked as land-marks on our plan, until we reached a ravine and forded the shallow stream rushing down its course. There the path

forked, and before long we realised that we were unable to distinguish the correct track from the innumerable elephant paths that led off from it. We kept on along the most likely looking of the many tracks, climbed down a precipitous ravine, struggled up the opposite wall—and then realised we were off the path altogether. We consulted our plan, and then climbed a hill to see if we could locate the hut, which we knew could not then be far away. To our intense satisfaction we eventually made out an object gleaming in the distance, on our left, further off than we had reckoned, but doubtlessly the roof of the hut we were seeking, for we knew of no other being in the vicinity. Taking no stock of paths at all after that, we headed for that gleaming little roof, telling ourselves as we plodded on that it was a roof, and not some shining object dropped by a previous expedition.

Five more steep-walled gorges, that required great caution in negotiating, were crossed before we toiled up the last steep slope to that hut. Coming close to it we were perturbed to discover that it was merely the shell of a hut—and we had been told that Peter's Hut was as well constructed as Bismarck's!

We knew that something was wrong, and our spirits sank. Over the last stage Jim's boot had torn away from the soles, and though we had said nothing, we each knew that he would never be able to make the ascent over ice and snow to the summit, with that handicap. Now came the realisation that we had lost our bearings completely, and had not the faintest idea of the location of Peter's Hut. Unless something totally unexpected happened, we had failed in our task. We had only a limited supply of food and the inadequacy of our rough plan was painfully obvious.

Almost sick with disappointment, we entered the ruined hut, and sat down on a decayed bench. It was late afternoon, and we had not the slightest notion of our whereabouts, though we guessed that we had arrived at Johann's Hut. Where it lay in relation to

Peter's we did not know. Too dispirited to speak, we went outside, and scanned the silent wastes above us, hoping against hope that we might get a glimpse of the other hut, and still retrieve the situation. In vain. We looked at each other and cursed horribly. We considered Jim's boot and drew what comfort we could from that dilapidated object, telling ourselves that it would have been futile in any case, for anyone to try and cross snow with but one boot. All our philosophy was needed to reconcile us to the inevitable, and although it was long before we discovered any reserves of that handy commodity, we did at length manage to regain some of our spirits and settled down to discuss the situation.

We concluded, after a very short discussion, that it was useless attempting to rove at random over a wild, ravine-scarred mountain looking for a hut, and swallowed the pill. We would have to stay where we were for the night, and try and find our way back to Bismarck's on the morrow. We were a gloomy pair, that day.

I took our billy-cans, and went to search for water, while Jim hunted round for firewood. Pushing through a patch of dense forest I came out on the edge of a chasm, and decided to descend it in search of water. We had become adepts at climbing and descending deep declivities during our tramp, but I needed all my skill to get down that almost sheer wall. At the bottom I was rewarded by finding a still pool of crystal-clear, ice-cold water—water such as I had never seen before. So still and clear was it that delicate cresses, growing beneath its surface, seemed to be growing on dry rock, with nothing denser than clear air pressing on its soft green fronds.

I filled two billy-cans, and two mugs with that marvellous water, and then looked at the shrub-coloured walls rising above me. How I was going to get it up to the top I did not know, but using elbows and toes I had a shot at it—and got there, only half a mugful of water lighter than when I started—and

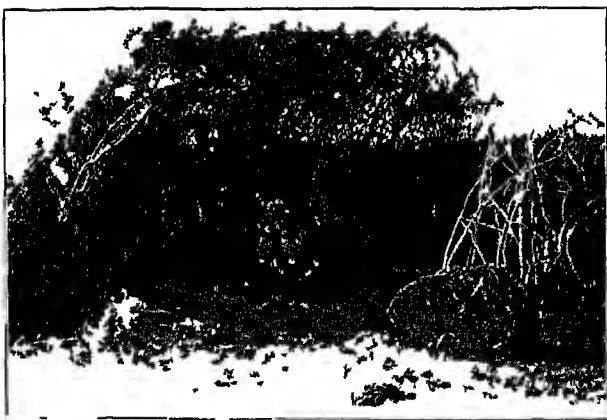
yet I was not going to be vouchsafed an opportunity of scaling Kibo! The world is out of joint!

After delivering the precious fluid I wandered off alone, like a calf that has lost its mother. Down to the source of our liquid refreshment I went, by a different path this time, and found good water that could be had by stooping. On, up a slope covered by elephant grass, and across a dip I wandered. I was looking for Peter's. A forest, damp and dank, and very gloomy, lay before me. I followed a fairly recent elephant track into it, brushed by the grotesque grey-beard moss hanging thickly from every trunk and branch, descended steeply to a small ravine, and suddenly half-disappeared into a cunningly concealed animal pit. I tried in another direction then, but the mountain seemed to drop away to plain level at the edge of that forest and rise again on the other side of a mighty valley. It was growing dark, and I didn't want to bump into Tembo in that forest, where there was scarcely room to turn. I retraced my steps, joined Jim near the hut, and we felt again the melancholy misery, born of inglorious failure, as we gazed at Kibo's clearly-revealed, and seemingly close, snow-covered summit. Sunset glories, enchantingly beautiful, descended once more on the plain beneath us, but we were sick at heart, and could not respond to their appeal. We ate an evening meal, which neither of us enjoyed, spread our blankets near the blazing fire, and turned in. A sombre ending to a day we had thought would be one of the most pleasantly memorable of our tramp from Capetown to Cairo!

Not a wisp of cloud hung round Kibo's shining morning dome when we turned out in the chill air next day to look upon the goal we were to have headed for. Her dazzling snows appeared close enough to touch, and even Mawenzi's rugged head, streaked with white silver, had a less repellent aspect than usual. It was a perfect day for making an attempt on the summit, but, of course we could not attain it by starting from where we were.



Filling up, or Water *Barramills* in a Turkana *lugga*.



A typical Turkana "Hut" near the Uganda Border



Toiling up to Uganda from the Turkana Plains



Askari Signallers at Pute Post sending off our "Distress Call" to the K A R Post at Kakumari

Heavy-hearted, we breakfasted, gathered up our chattels, swung on our packs, and set off to find the path back to Bismarck. In the deceptive country up there it was difficult to keep to the path by which we had come, but we singled out a landmark and kept roughly to our direction. Unfortunately we struck the ravines at higher—or perhaps it was lower—points than on the previous day, and the difficulties of our walk were thereby multiplied ten-fold. At every one of the ravines we were checked, and several times we had to cast up and down along the brink of one or the other of them, to find a way down. Often, after slipping and sliding downwards for scores of feet, the chasm would be seen falling away sheer for hundreds of feet, absolutely perpendicular. Then we would have to edge our way upwards again, and commence the descent elsewhere. Sometimes we hung halfway between the top and bottom, our backs pressed against a rock, our heels dug into a tangle of dead moss, and our fingers hooked into the crevice of a rotten boulder, endeavouring to fix a rope that we had carried from Bismarck's so that we could let ourselves down a little farther. Then, arrived at the bottom, after a succession of hair-breadth escapes from a too-precipitate descent, we would be faced with the task of scaling a soft, slippery wall, through which water was seeping in many places, and which offered no foot or finger holds, save a tangle of bracken, shrub and moss, that we had to push through with head and shoulders, and which frequently came away in large chunks, when we gripped it in order to pull ourselves a little higher up. Our packs were a great impediment to our progress, and frequently one of us had to climb ahead and pull the two packs up, stage by stage. Once, when we were about halfway up a particularly difficult ascent, Jim's helmet was brushed off by the undergrowth we were worming our way through, and it fell down to the very edge of the stream at the foot of the canyon, hitting the sides in its descent about twice. As I watched Jim starting after it I felt deeply for him, and wedged mine

down over my ears. By early afternoon we still had a couple of ravines to negotiate, and had not located the track. We stopped for a bite to eat by one of those streams of crystal water, and then resumed our task. A few more hours went by, and then, about 4.30 p.m. we discovered the track, much to our relief, for we did not want to be stranded on the mountain, without shelter for the night.

Still deploring the failure of our plans, but cheered somewhat by the locating of the path, we hurried across the patch of elephant grass, from which we had viewed Kibo on the previous morning. We reached the grey-beard forest above Bismarck's, made the steep descent through it, paused at the hut only long enough to return the rope, and lock the hut, and continued down the mountain, our aim being to reach Marangu that night.

In spite of all our haste, darkness came on before we reached the lower forest, and we had to advance down a boulder-strewn path through inky darkness. There was a danger of losing the narrow track, but we trusted to our sense of direction to take us through. So that we might make better progress, we tore up newspapers, and twisted them into flares, which we lighted in turn from the expiring flame of the one we had to relinquish. It was a slow business, and the roughness of the going did not make matters any easier. Reaching the vicinity of the stream, we felt our way through the trees to its brink, and drank deeply of its refreshingly cold waters. Then down the endless stony way to the mission we jolted, lighted over the final miles by a native, whom we roused from his hut, and who carried a hurricane lamp for us. It was with a feeling of unutterable relief that we finally came to Dr. Reusch's cottage, for we had been on our feet for 12½ hours—it was then 9 p.m.—and had had but two rests. Our boots—in a bad state of repair—were causing us intense discomfort, and our strenuous climbing had tired us greatly.

Our disappointment at finding the house shut up, and in darkness, was great. We were in need of food, for

we had eaten little all day, and we felt disinclined to walk even the extra half mile or so to the hotel, especially as the Doctor had invited us to stay with him on our return. We eventually decided there was nothing else for it, however, as repeated knockings failed to arouse anybody within. At the hotel we found the Doctor and his wife, and they were full of solicitude when we explained our failure to them. They insisted on us returning with them to their home forthwith, prepared us an enjoyable meal, and made us go to bed as soon as it was over. Never in the whole course of our walk had we been treated with greater kindness and consideration than by those two very delightful mission people.

Our hosts allowed us to sleep on, and we lay in bed until a later hour than ever before on our trip, save during the time we were laid up at Broken Hill. Bearded and travel-stained generally, we must have looked unprepossessing individuals at breakfast, but we soon forgot that in such an hospitable atmosphere, and we made ourselves at ease until 11 a.m., when we bade our friends goodbye, and started the walk back to Moshi. Not being in such a great haste as on our outward journey, we had a more ample opportunity of studying the beauties of that mountain route, and the miles slipped behind us unnoticed, despite our tortured feet.

The tramp was truly a joy, and one which we will both long remember. At Old Moshi Mission, which we reached at 3 p.m., Dr. Gottman was again the perfect host, and appeared genuinely sorry at our lack of success, although he expressed himself as of the opinion that a benign providence was responsible for our having taken the wrong track, for he felt certain that, had we attempted to negotiate the ice-field and the deep snows at that season of the year, we would almost certainly have perished. Down the break-neck hill, from the mission, where every jolting step was a petty torture, we went, and came into Moshi just as darkness fell.

Though we had failed in our attempt on the summit, we did not regret the effort we had made, for our closer acquaintance with the mountain had served but to give us a deeper appreciation of its majesty and beauty.

Dawkins succeeded in roping in our porters next morning and we started around the mountain for Longido, and the Kenya border. It was a glorious day of bright sunshine, yet pleasantly cool, with a faint suggestion of a breeze blowing down from the mountain slopes. Often the visitor to Moshi is baulked of a view of Kilimanjaro, because of the clouds that obscure it, but we had been exceptionally fortunate, and again this day Kibo's snows stood out clear, gleaming even more brightly than before, and Mawenzi, too, was clearly visible. At the day's end we camped on the north side of the mountain, pitching our camp in a glorious forest setting. Kibo's dome had been mantled by its cloud-wreaths during the late afternoon, but as the sun was setting, it shone forth once more—an unforgettable picture. Mawenzi's crest, broken and jagged, stood out snow-streaked and wild. Mount Meru, purpling in the distance, flashed gold from behind her north-west edge, where the sun was sinking. Perfume of mopani honey—produce of the tiny mopani bee—was blown to us by a cool breeze from the heights, and it filled the air with sweetness. It was a magic hour. Gleaming-white Kibo flushed pink, and the mists below his crown flamed red-gold as we watched. Shadows around the mountain's mighty base turned from richest purple to sombre black, and twilight changed to night. Then the moon came up, and another glory was revealed. Kibo by moonlight was the grandest sight of all!

All the following day we trekked around the base of the mountain, gradually leaving the forest country behind, and entering once more on the dusty black-soil plain belt. At sunset we reached a collection of corrugated iron huts, set on the open plain at the very foot of the mountain. It was the Kilimanjaro Government school

for the European children of the Moshi district. We found it deserted, and although we saw a table set for several people, there was not a white person in sight. We waited until well after darkness had set in, and then a motor lorry returned loaded with firewood, a couple of gazelle, and about 20 children. The Principal of the school, Mr. C. Ivan Booth, a Tasmanian, greeted us enthusiastically, and told us that he had been out on his usual evening excursion for meat and fuel for the school. As the place was extremely isolated, and in the heart of the Masai country, he found it necessary to take his whole school with him when he ventured far afield. The Masai warrior, even in these days is not an exactly docile individual. A poor shivering wretch of a native, standing silently beside us while we were speaking with Booth illustrated that fact. One of his ears was a mass of gory pulp, his head was bruised and bleeding, and there was a gash half an inch deep between his thumb and forefinger. He had been set upon by a gang of Masai warriors and almost beaten to death, because he had approached Booth some days previously, and asked permission to graze cattle on land around the school where the belligerent Masai already held grazing rights for their herds.

From the school to Longido our experiences were similar to those endured on the march from Arusha to Moshi, the country being parched and waterless. The drought conditions had a demoralising effect on our *safari*. One morning one of the boys refused to go farther, saying he was too weak to march. As we had a long, hot march before us, and no water would be obtained until Longido was reached, we were in a predicament, as there were no other porters available. The Masai, of course, resolutely refused to engage in the work. We endeavoured to urge the boy on, but he persisted in his refusal, so Jim and I divided his load between us, and started off after the others. We had not gone far before the deserter came running after us, and asked permission to walk along side us as far as Longido,

stating that he was afraid to be left alone in the Masai country, for he would surely have his throat cut. Weighted down with our burdens, and with over 30 thirsty miles before us, we had no sympathy to waste on defaulters, so we ordered him back, expressing the pious hope that the Masai would act according to expectations.

Plodding through the soft grey dust under the blazing sun, with the unusual weight on our shoulders, we suffered tortures before that terrible day was half over. The porters grumbled more and more as the day advanced, and the fear was always with us that they, too, would drop their bundles and desert. The dry dust got in our throats, our tongues felt like leather, and our lips were dry and sore through lack of water. Away to the horizon on either hand stretched the treeless, scorched plain, and as the hours passed, and nothing that promised relief from our tortures showed up, our spirits drooped. Glancing occasionally to our rear, we could see the snows of Kilimanjaro, clear-shining and cool, a hellish torment to us then.

By late afternoon our painful march had slowed to a crawl and we had to force ourselves to keep moving at all. Hardly any rain falls in that inferno from one year's end to another, and the whole plain is covered with fine, powdery dust that is ankle-deep in places. We were a ghostly looking party as we trudged through the dreary, thirsty waste, as our bodies, clothing, and baggage were covered with a grey pall of the dust that was stirred up at every footstep. When we were almost at the end of our strength, we saw a motor truck advancing towards us from the direction of Moshi. Greatly heartened, we threw down our loads and waited for it to come up. It was a native-driven transport truck heading for Longido. For 3s. the driver agreed to take our loads on as far as that point.

Feeling like men reprieved we began the remaining eight miles of our journey, walking free. Rarely did the sight of a settlement appear so welcome as did the

huts of Longido when we came on them that evening. An encampment of askari of the King's African Rifles, who were engaged on a campaign of locust extermination, lay on the outskirts of the settlement, and there we slaked our thirsts with huge draughts of clear, fresh water. How we drank!

Umbashi, whom we had sent on ahead with our baggage had taken possession of a wattle-and-daub structure near the District Officer's quarters, and had our supper prepared. We fell to, and ate as only famished men can eat.

There is a water-catchment in Longido Mountain, and the post is supplied by a pipe leading from it. After supper Jim and I made our way to the tap, and to the huge delight of a large audience of Masai, we stripped and bathed in the open air. The Masai were immensely tickled by the operation, as there was not one of them in the assembled crowd who had ever used water for any other purpose but drinking. Their delight was increased when Jim, in attempting to balance himself on a rock while he was drying himself, slipped backwards into a particularly vile thorn-bush, a performance which won appreciative howls from the dusky onlookers.

Turnbull, the Acting District Officer, was at supper when we called on him, and he invited us to join him. We conveniently forgot that we had already dined, and accepted the invitation. We certainly did not give ourselves away by any show of lost appetite. In the middle of the meal a young subaltern of the K.A.R., one Rossiter by name, bounced into the room, and after introducing himself as the worst shot in Africa, entertained us with an account of a rhino hunt in which he had been engaged since early morning. As far as I can recall the details, it had not been a hunt in the sense that he was trailing a quarry. He had come on a rhino near the camp in the morning, and had spent the day blazing away at it, without scoring a hit. It was refreshing to meet such a man. Almost without

exception, other hunters we had met on the trek, had been, if their accounts were to be believed, phenomenally accurate shots. We sympathised with him, and in the course of further conversation learned that he was a cousin of a friend of ours in Perth, West Australia. Truly coincidence is the frequently-recurring unexpected.

We made quite a happy party. The harmony of the evening, however, was somewhat disturbed by the arrival of a spokesman representing our porters, who announced that the boys would not go on with us next day. There were no other carriers available at Longido, and as the boys refused to be persuaded, we made up our packs as we had done in the first months of our journey, and arranged with Turnbull to have the remainder of our baggage forwarded on to Nairobi, when transport was available. The next day Umbashi, Jim and I, set out on a 130-mile tramp to Nairobi, carrying a couple of blankets, a little food, our two water-bottles, rifles and ammunition. Twenty miles from Longido we crossed the border and entered Kenya Colony on May 18th. Half of our journey was then completed.

CHAPTER XIII

CLOSE CALLS

CAUGHT BY A ROGUE ELEPHANT—A CAMP-FIRE ALARM—NOCTURNAL HUNTERS—WHERE LIONS ROAMED—NAIROBI TOWN—DESERT MARCH PLANNED

OUR JOURNEY through those first 4,000 miles of the African wilds had produced few major excitements. Interests had been many and varied, but adventures of a thrilling nature had passed us by. We were not seeking them, it is true, but neither were we seeking them in Kenya—and Kenya provided us with sufficient thrills to satisfy even the most foolhardy. Nor were they long in coming. We had barely crossed the border when a rogue elephant nearly finished our careers, and that same night a hyena missed depriving Wilson of a limb by the narrowest of margins.

At an Indian duka (store) a few miles beyond the border we had arranged for a waterless stretch ahead by engaging a broken-down truck to convey a can of water, in Umbashi's charge, to a point 30 miles on, where it was to be dropped. We followed on foot. Ten miles on our way we came to the last running water we would see in 40 miles, and there decided to halt for a bathe and a rest. As we were dressing after our bath, we heard a peculiar grunting sound coming from the direction of a thick clump of thorn-bushes near at hand. There was a great deal of elephant and rhino spoor by the water's edge, and we guessed that one or other of those beasts was responsible for the noise.

Dressing hastily we advanced cautiously to investigate. We had gone about ten yards when we were

confronted by an imposing sight—a huge bull elephant with fine large tusks stood facing us at fifteen yards distance, flapping his tremendous ears slowly back and forth. The bushes in which he was standing came only to his great knees, and we had a full view of his bulky form. He saw us as soon as we saw him, for his great ears came forward and remained motionless—an ominous sign. He was listening, intent on catching the slightest sound, for Tembo relies more on his hearing than his sight. We had no licence to shoot elephants—it costs £150 to shoot one elephant in Kenya—and although the beast presented a magnificent target, we both agreed, speaking in low whispers, that it would not be politic to shoot.

For a while the huge brute stood perfectly still, eyeing us, and then startled us slightly by taking a short rush in our direction. We retreated hurriedly for a few paces, and then returned, as the tusker had stopped. No sooner had we again taken up our positions than he came forward once more. This time I, too, advanced a pace, and the elephant stopped. Sorely tempted, I drew a sight on him, and fingered the trigger longingly, but checked myself. How we cursed the fact that we had sent the cameras on that morning! By doing so we lost the opportunity of securing one of the finest elephant studies conceivable. But the subject of the study was not posing for amateur photographers. He was in a bad temper, it was evident. He grunted angrily, looked at us uncertainly, for a moment, and then, turning, crashed his way into the bushes. We circled round to get another view, our curiosity still unsatiated, and came up with him again within a short distance. He was facing away from us, in a little clump of low bushes, about 15 paces away, just at the edge of a small clearing. As we reached the edge of the cleared space he turned, watched us for a second, and then up went his trunk into the air, his mighty ears swept forward, and giving vent to an ear-piercing scream, he charged.

For a fraction of a second I held my ground, for what insane purpose I know not, but as the madly trumpeting beast came on, with almost incredible speed, the horror of what was impending flashed across my mind, and I turned and dashed for my life after Wilson. Mighty feet thundering behind me, staccato trumpeting shattering the silence of the bush, told me in an instant that the brute was on me, and that a horrible death was imminent. Straining every muscle and sinew, I ran as I had never run before, but it was futile. In another stride that terrible menacing trunk was arched over my head, those bulky knees were all but touching me, and casting a fleeting glance over my shoulder, I saw his huge ears—to my mind then, the most horrifying sight of all—almost sweeping my shoulders. The din of his trumpeting was frightful, but for some reason not to be explained, the stunning blow from the upraised trunk did not fall. I twisted from under it, and made for an ant-hill, hoping that if I could reach it and dodge suddenly round it, the infuriated monster might go lumbering past.

Somehow I reached that expected haven unscathed, though I had gained not a yard by dodging. Right up to the hillock I dashed, and then spun away at a sharp angle. Those tactics were futile. For all his tremendous proportions Tembo was as quick to turn as I. The side of the ant-hill went up in a cloud of dust, and Tembo was on me as I shot into the bushes nearby—he screaming still, and too incensed, perhaps, to realise that he could end the chase whenever he willed. I was never for a moment beyond the reach of his trunk.

Presently, to the horrible din of his trumpeting was added the terrifying sound of crashing trees, saplings and bushes that brushed me, as they fell before his mighty rush. I was then almost exhausted. Seconds the chase had lasted, though I thought it was minutes. I knew that it must end swiftly, and I determined on a last effort. To dodge—hopeless as it might be—was

all that was left me. At that instant I was passing a tangled thicket of thorns. I spun round it and—my lungs now almost bursting with the sustained effort—I circled it as fast as I could go.

With rather a sick feeling of hopelessness I saw that those ears, that trunk, were with me still. I swept my surroundings at a swift glance. There was nowhere else I could head for, and I was then on the second circuit of the thicket. Still that menacing trunk did not fall. But what did it matter? Soon he would get me beneath his feet, for I could not sustain the pace. We were round for the third time. I glanced upwards and backwards again. It was nearly the last glimpse I had of anything in this world—huge ears swinging, mighty trunk descending. Frantically, I threw myself sideways into the centre of the thicket.

But Tembo was not to be so easily thwarted. He crashed in on top of me, and never blundered a yard. His trunk smashed through the wicked-looking thorn brambles, and tore them aside as if they were fern fronds. I was down on the earth. His trunk caught me as I staggered up, and down I went again, blood streaming from my mouth, where two teeth had been displaced, and from my thorn-scratched legs. I still held my rifle, clutched in one hand, but I never got a fraction of the time necessary to turn and fire. From under those wildly trampling feet that had missed me by a miracle, I staggered, stumbled forward out of the thicket, and pitched headlong on to my face, the pursuing fiend thundering after me. My helmet slipped and instinctively I made a grab at it, but it was under one of those huge feet. I remember I thought that I did not need a hat to die in, and waited for the crushing weight to fall. One last effort before the end! I half rose, staggered two paces, and pitched down, I was ready for it then, and held my breath to take the first shock of the crushing tons of flesh.

The trumpeting ceased suddenly. Seemingly an age I lay there, but nothing came, I looked back, and there

was Tembo, mighty, maddened, Tembo, who a second before had been intent on destroying me—standing, trunk outstretched, as still as stone, like a black carved image, his huge ears strained forward to catch any sound. He was standing by my crushed helmet, and I believe that I owed my life then to the fact that he thought that he had crushed me, too, when he stamped on my helmet. I can think of no other explanation. Life was sweet at that moment, for I knew the chase was over. I crawled to my feet, and moved quietly out of the danger zone, feeling very thankful, very meek, and a trifle sore.

During the chase Jim was unaware of what was taking place in the thicket, as in his dash for life, he had taken a slightly different course from me, and did not know but that I had got clear. The commotion made by the stamping and trumpeting elephant, he had, of course heard, but believed that it was merely the elephant displaying his bad temper. My first concern after I had gone a few yards from the danger zone was to shout to Jim to keep clear in case he should blunder across the elephant's path. When Jim had recovered from the shock of seeing the state that I was in, we repaired together across the stream, and halted under a tree while I recovered my breath. We then debated the best course to pursue. We had both lost our helmets, and head-coverings are very necessary near the equator. We decided to return cautiously to the point where I had last seen Tembo, and try to shoot him. As we were making our way across the stream in his direction, a motor car, driven by Major Buxton, the District Officer of that area, and containing in addition his wife and another lady, approached from the direction of Longido. As the course which the car was taking approached perilously close to the point where the elephant had desisted in his chase, we warned them that a rogue elephant was in the vicinity, and Buxton accelerated until he was out of the danger zone and then stopped. After consultation the women climbed a tree out of harm's

way, and Buxton, Jim and I accompanied by Buxton's native gun-bearer, went back to reconnoitre the surrounding bush. Buxton informed us that a short time before another elephant from the same herd had killed a Kaffir woman in the vicinity, and had to be destroyed.

Although we searched long and hard we did not again see the elephant, as it had moved away silently—and it is a remarkable fact that the huge beasts can move off silently—to the mountain, which rose up from the bush about half a mile back from the scene of the encounter. We went over the course that the brute and I had taken in the wild chase, and I recovered my helmet, the smashed brim of which still bore plainly an imprint of the edge of one of the monster's feet. Buxton left us then, and Jim and I stayed until we had recovered Jim's helmet. It was then about 4 p.m. and we still had a twenty-mile tramp before us.

As we tramped on we saw much more fresh elephant spoor, but saw no more elephant, though other game was passed in large numbers. After we had covered about half the distance, we met Umbashi coming towards us, holding an automatic pistol, that we had loaned him for his protection, in a manner that indicated that if the need to use it arose, he would in all probability direct the wrong end of the weapon at whatever threatened. He seemed thoroughly scared of it, but clung tenaciously to it, evidently considering it a potent charm, the possession of which would in itself be sufficient to ward off all danger. Buxton had passed the site he had selected for our camp, and had told him of the happening at the stream. Straightaway the faithful fellow had set out to meet us, bringing us a reserve supply of cartridges, in case we should be in need of them. Evidently he understood that we had been charged by the whole herd, and had been left dealing out death amongst them right and left. He told us that he was in fear that our last cartridge would be expended while some elephants still remained, and that he would not arrive in time. He was overjoyed to find

us safe and sound. Fatigued, thirsty and very hungry we reached the camp fire, which Umbashi had lighted, about 9 p.m., and after despatching our supper, rolled up in our blankets near the blaze, and fell into a dreamless sleep.

About 2 a.m. I was aroused by a shout from Jim, and sat up in time to see a dim shape slinking away from his feet. It was a hyena, but it faded into the darkness before we were out of our blankets. Jim explained that he had been awakened by a sudden pull at his blanket, which had been wrapped tightly around his feet, but which the marauder had pulled away. We examined it, and found that the loathsome brute had torn off a long strip of it, and there were several marks where its teeth had sunk in. A hyena is reputed to be capable of snapping off an ox's leg at one bite, and had he advanced his snout a few inches further before making his snap, Jim would almost certainly have been minus a portion of one limb.

For the remainder of the tramp to Nairobi we passed through well pastured, undulating country, where the numbers of game of every description gave the impression that we were in a particularly large zoological garden, where cages were dispensed with. At night when we lay down on the turf around our fires, we could hear the thunder of hooves as zebra, kongoni, or giraffe herds fled before the hunting packs of hyenas, and on occasions the yap-yap of jackals at the heels of the flying herds told us that Simba was abroad. It is stated that the jackal frequently assists the lion in the hunt by driving the quarry until, when nearly exhausted, it is shepherded in the direction in which Simba is lying in wait. Large fires were necessary every night, as we were in bad lion country. At Kajiado, Major Buxton's post, Jim had his first encounter with the brutes, but came out of it almost unscathed, a bite on one hand being the only injury he sustained. It taught him to handle baby cubs with caution after that. Two little balls of fluff, that had been brought in to the settlement by a

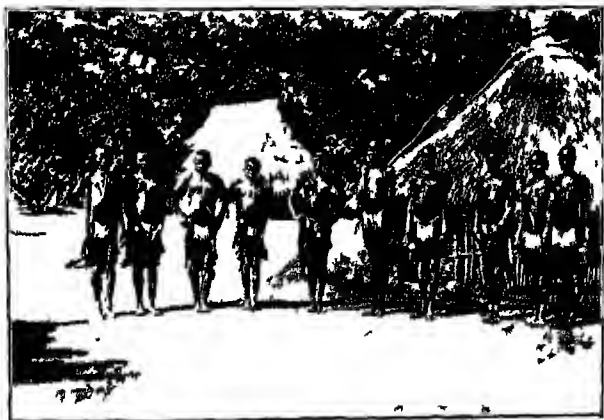
Masai who had slain their parents, appeared harmless enough, but when Jim picked them up, one of them showed his resentment by snapping at this hand and growling in quite a fearsome way. Our rest was disturbed nightly by hyenas that ringed us round and ventured almost to our fires, but though Simba occasionally announced his presence in the vicinity by a full deep-throated roar he never troubled us.

On May 23rd we reached Ngong, the first settlement outside Nairobi, and stayed the night at the pumping station, which serves to supply the Magadi soda lake some miles away with drinking water. It was in charge of a South African and his wife, Mr. and Mrs. Nepken, who had been at the place for eighteen years, arriving there when Kenya was a wild, almost uninhabited territory. They were a charming couple, and endeavoured to persuade us to prolong our stay with them, a request which we very reluctantly refused. Theirs is a delightful home, set amongst its roses and lawns in the midst of a pleasant coppice. While we were there we were particularly struck by a beautifully-mounted skin of a fine black-maned lion, which Nepken had shot near his home, after it had very nearly mauled him. With the possible exception of a similar skin seen in Nairobi, it was the finest black-maned lion trophy we saw in all Africa. Nepken told us that he had seen as many as ten lions around a carcase in front of his door at one time and had frequently shot them from the stoep of his home.

When we left next morning for Nairobi, the guide provided by Nepken to show us a short cut into Nairobi town, proceeded very cautiously in crossing a stretch of open plain a few miles from the homestead. Coming down a slope to a river he slowed his pace and peered fearfully from side to side, at the same time motioning us to keep silence. When we had made the crossing and surmounted the rise on the opposite side, he looked back and after proceeding a short distance further, announced that everything was all right. The place, he said, was one of Simba's favourite haunts—and that but



Our *Safari* in the Dodinga country SE Sudan



Dodinga Maidens



A Shalluk Village above Flood Level The Sudd Swamps.



Bad Going in the Lesser Swamplands

a few miles from the town itself. Antelope were astir early on the flats and we passed close by many herds. Soon the first homesteads of Nairobi's outlying settlement came in sight, and we were agreeably surprised that our route then lay along more than one fine avenue of Australian golden wattle—sights and scents of home at one degree south of the Equator!

Down a deep wide valley, up the farthest slope, and we were in the lines of the third battalion of the King's African Rifles, on the southern boundary of the town. Past green-walled, red-roofed buildings we went, treading the first bitumen-surfaced road that we had seen for many a long day, skirted the golf links, and crossing the railway, found ourselves in Sixth Avenue, Nairobi's main street. The Avenue Hotel, eight stories high, a handsome edifice of white stone, and many fine buildings beyond, were included in our first glimpse of Kenya's capital. At the post office we collected the first mail we had had for three months, through the good offices of the Post Master, Mr. Templeton, who opened up the building for us, the place being closed as it was Empire Day. Receiving that mail was the most joyful experience we had had for many months.

Before we could cross from the Northern Frontier Province into Abyssinia we had to obtain the permission of the Abyssinian authorities. Through the good offices of Mr. E. Bird, Chief Clerk in the Governor's office, and of the Acting Governor's aide-de-camp, we secured an introduction to Sir Jacob Barth the Acting Governor of the Colony, who received us very graciously and promised us every assistance in his power. Telegrams were despatched on our behalf to the British Chargé d'Affaires in Addis Abbaba, the capital of Abyssinia, requesting permission for us to pass through that country. We were delayed several days awaiting a reply, and when it came it amounted almost to a flat refusal to allow us to proceed by that route. It was pointed out that Southern Abyssinia was in a very disturbed state, "Shiftahs," or bandits, roamed the

CHAPTER XIV

A KENYA GARDEN

ACROSS THE ATHI PLAINS—FORT HALL—TALES OF THE SLAVE
RAIDERS—KIKUYU COUNTRY—MT. KENYA—FREEZING ON THE
EQUATOR—MERU

FIFTEEN days elapsed before we received our final reply from Addis Abbaba. Our surplus kit had been sent on by K.A.R. transport to Marsabit, and we engaged three porters at Nairobi to accompany us as far as Meru, a journey of over 200 miles. There we intended securing fresh boys to carry our few belongings as far as Isiola, at which point we intended engaging camel transport. Taking with us for that first stage, only our blankets and stretchers, and a small supply of food, we headed north once more, on the morning of June the 8th.

Our road lay through smiling coffee lands, across the Athi Plains, past Kiambu, Ruiru and beyond old Doinya Sabuk Mountain, to Fort Hall, in the foothills of Mount Kenya. It was a pleasant journey through a green countryside, crossed by numerous rushing streams. On either hand prettily situated homesteads caught the eye, neat stone structures gleaming white amidst the green of their coffee and sisal plantations. The settlers, we found, were all extremely hospitable.

Fort Hall is an interesting little post. We reached it at dusk one evening by climbing across a valley and trekking up a steep slope, to a crooked little street, lighted by hurricane lamps set on the top of poles. Deep mountain valleys fell away on either side, and mountain mists lay over it. Perched on a ridge in the centre of a green-carpeted stretch of park-land we found the home

of the District Commissioner. There we had the fortune to meet Mr. McKean, a District Commissioner from Lodwar, in the heart of Northern Turkana, who had been on leave in Nairobi. He told us he would be returning to his post by another route, and that he would probably be at Lodwar before we reached that point, in the event of our deciding to go that way. He supplied us with much useful and interesting information about the nature of the district between Lake Rudolph and his own post, and told us much that was new to us about the habits of the raiding savages of the neighbouring areas, to the north and north-east of Turkana. The Merille tribe from Abyssinia, he told us, had made no less than half-a-dozen raids into Turkana between January and April of that year, and had massacred a hundred and six Turkana natives. The Donyero, Taposso and Dodinga, naked marauding tribesmen from the South-Eastern Sudan, were in league with the Abyssinians, and on occasion joined in their raids into Turkana. They each carried two long-bladed spears, and many of them were armed with magazine rifles of Italian or French pattern—the former mostly relics of the Italo-Abyssinian war of 1875, which ended so disastrously for the Italians. The raiders were cattle-thieves all, McKean told us, and occasionally indulged in a little slave raiding. McKean himself had followed the raiders up the western shore of Lake Rudolph, when they were returning from one such raid, and had seen the bodies of native children speared, in sheer wantonness, by the savages who had carried off their parents. McKean was of the opinion that the defeat of the raiding parties, which we had read about the day before we left Nairobi, was likely to render our progress through the troubled district somewhat more hazardous, as the tribesmen would be in such a mood that for a long time to come they would be likely to murder any European who crossed their path.

A heavy mist lay over the lawns and avenues of the Fort Hall Boma when we sallied forth from our rest hut

early the following morning. Mountainous ridges, carpeted with green, lay all about us, and a beautiful stretch of natural lawn, used as a golf course by the resident officials, sloped away from beneath our hut to the valley below. It was an extraordinarily beautiful spot. Leaving the Boma, we descended by a steep path through the wet grass, and struck a road leading through the Kikuyu Reserve, a huge area on the slopes of Mount Kenya, set aside for the Kikuyu natives. The road zigzagged around steep slopes, crossed many fine streams of hurrying water, and continued up hill and down dale until it led us to the glorious upland country below the snows of Mount Kenya.

For several days we were marching around the mountain, for Meru lies among the forests on the north-east side of it, and we had to make a semi-circle around the mountain to reach it.

We crossed the Equator on the morning of June 15th. It was a bitterly cold day. A strong, biting wind came whistling across the open grass land, and, finding out the rents in our shirts, set us walking at a rapid rate in order to keep warm. It was far different from what our conception of the Equator had been. To our right the clouds that had hung over Mt. Kenya's rugged summit for days, were dispersing, and we saw the jagged snow-streaked ridges of that 17,000-foot peak showing forth. The morning sun, shining on the enormous glacier below the uppermost peaks, provided an impressive sight, but the spectacle lacked the grandeur of Kibo seen at the same hour, resembling rather Kilimanjaro's lesser peak, Mawenzi. Mt. Kenya resembles that peak, too, in the grimness and wildness of its aspect.

Nanyuki township, where we crossed the line, is about 7,000 feet above sea level, and at that season of the year a regular ice-box. Ten miles from Meru we entered a deep forest, and the boys fell silent, for large elephant herds and numbers of rhino have their haunts in its depth, and they were scared of suddenly encountering any of the beasts on the narrow track we were following.

The undergrowth in the forest is almost impenetrable, and the only means of progressing through the dense growth was by following a native track which had apparently been used for centuries by natives in going to and from their forest villages. Now and then a muttered exclamation from one of the porters told us that they had brushed against the nettles that grew in profusion along the track. Several times we ourselves experienced the petty tortures inflicted by those vile weeds—to touch them ever so lightly was to suffer effects almost exactly similar to those produced by contact with a steam jet—a sudden painful burning sensation, that inflamed the flesh terribly and left white blisters an inch in diameter on the skin. They were the most poisonous nettles we ever had the misfortune to encounter.

The forest became deeper and darker as we advanced. Huge trunks towered sixty to eighty feet overhead, and the sun's light was shut out by the thick foliage of their branches. Monkeys and baboons chattered overhead, and occasionally the crashing of branches told us that elephants were moving in large numbers not far from our path. We passed several natives of the Meru tribe in the forest, and were struck by their similarity to the Wagogo tribe of the Dodoma district, they having adopted the same style of head-dress, and favouring the plastering of their bodies with red woad. At one of their villages we pressed one of their number into service as a guide, and he brought us finally to Meru township, on the far edge of the forest.

In the absence of the District Commissioner we sought out his assistant, Mr. E. R. Shackleton, a young Irishman, and a second cousin to the famous Antarctic explorer. He was a very fine fellow, typical of the Officers of the East African administration. He invited us to share his quarters while we were at Meru, and before dinner that evening motored us out to the K.A.R. lines, where we found that our stores, forwarded from Nairobi, had arrived safely, and we were awaiting trans-

port to take them on to Marsabit. There we made the acquaintance of Captain E. Rowland, the Officer Commanding the post, and his second-in-command, Captain Hughes. Hughes informed us that he was the officer who had to take the camels from Marsabit to Loki-taung. He said he was proceeding as far as Marsabit by the motor convoy which was to take our goods on, and would arrive at Marsabit on the 25th—it was then the 18th. He suggested that we definitely decide on the Lodwar route, so that we could accompany him as far as that post. We had been thinking over taking an alternative route through Turkana, after leaving Marsabit, but our difficulties regarding transport would be over, for at least the worst part of the territory, if we accompanied Hughes, and we decided finally to fall in with his suggestion.

On returning to the Boma we stopped at the home of Captain Roy Whittet, M.C., the Game-Warden of the Territory—a jovial, happy-go-lucky soul—who insisted that we join him at dinner on the following evening. We also met Mr. W. O. Sunman, the Agricultural Officer, who pressed us to join him at lunch the next day. An hospitable crowd. We adjourned in company to Shackleton's quarters for several "sundowners", and a couple of hours "jaw" before dinner. Those evenings passed in pleasant company were memorable in an otherwise rather lonely trek. Wilson and I had long ago talked ourselves out, and company was ever welcome.

The ever-recurring difficulty concerning the engagement of porters, was responsible for our being held up the following day in Meru, but we made the most of our time. After the luxury of a warm bath and an excellent breakfast—things that meant much to us in those days—Jim and I tramped out to the K.A.R. lines, added further stores to our baggage there, and made our final arrangements with Captain Sweetman, in charge of the transport department, for the unloading of the whole of our baggage at Marsabit. The courtesy and assistance we received from the officers of the King's African Rifles

were unlimited, and a considerable help to us in the early stages of our trip across the extraordinarily difficult country north of the Guaso Nyiro.

Back at the Boma, making arrangements for the engagement of a couple of Wameru porters with Shackleton, we heard the details of a grim little incident that furnished us with a vivid insight into the kind of service which is required of those who serve Britain in the outposts of Africa. The Adjutant of the K.A.R. dropped in to gather a few details connected with a mission on which he was about to set out. He stated his business briefly. He was bound for the Abyssinian border, to bring in the remains of a brother officer who had been murdered up there by a few traitorous askari, some years before. The officer had been buried on the spot, but Abyssinian raiders had desecrated the grave, and it had been removed, only to be broken open again. The Adjutant's task was to locate that lonely, maltreated grave, somewhere out in the northern wilderness, and bring the officer's remains into Nairobi. He was seeking some information regarding the probable whereabouts of the grave from Hopkins, the District Commissioner who was with the unfortunate man when he was murdered, but as Hopkins was away on *safari*, the Adjutant had to leave on an errand that would mean a journey of about 700 miles, there and back, with the meagre particulars already in his possession.

We had a rather hilarious dinner party at Whittet's abode that evening, and it was close on midnight before we sought our couches. Meru was a bright spot in our wanderings.

CHAPTER XV

DESERT PATHS

ACROSS THE ANGATA KASUT—ISIOLO—CAMEL TRANSPORT ENGAGED
—ZEBRA TAMING—THROUGH THE GUASO NYIRO—ARCHER'S POST
—ENCOUNTER WITH RHINO—LOCUST SWARMS—A NIGHT ALARM—
CHARGED BY A RHINO—BY LUGGA AND PALM—MEETING WITH
K.A.R. CONVOY—MARSABIT OASIS—ELEPHANT—THE BORDER PATROL

MOUNT KENYA was gleaming clearly in the strong sunlight as we passed through the parade ground of the K.A.R. barracks and took the Marsabit track, across the Angata Kasut or plain of yellowing grass. In that morning we made another of those marches that took us from a fairy land of green pastures and sparkling streams, to a parched, brown wilderness of withered grass and thorn scrub. As we trekked on through the heat, we could see the bare plain stretching away to the horizon in a wide arc, broken at intervals by a number of isolated dead-looking kopjes. It was an uninviting and dreary scene.

Late in the afternoon we came to a rocky limestone hollow, and found a series of abundant springs bubbling up from the black cotton-soil, and forming large pools at which native cattle were drinking. Being thirsty, we sought out a pool that had not been fouled by the beasts, and drank deeply. We found that it tasted strongly of natron, or soda, and in fact it was really a mineral-water spring. We were astonished to find water at all at that spot, as there was but one small kopje in the neighbourhood, and the level plain stretched away on either hand. The source of the supply was a mystery. A band of natives, wearing grotesque masks of grey clay, were camped at the pools, but they were stupid, miser-

able looking folk, and we could not discover of what tribe they were. They were the only natives we had seen in that part of the country wearing such masks, and it appeared to us as if they were an isolated band connected with none of the known tribes of that area—a kind of lost people.

At the end of that hot day the wind-swept brown hills above Isiolo came into view, and then a scattered collection of huts on the withered yellow plain, was sighted. The Protectorate flag—a red lion in a circle, on a blue ground, with the Union Jack in the left-hand top corner—fluttering in the gale that was sweeping across from the Nyambeni hills, to the east, indicated the location of the Boma.

It was then about 6 p.m., and despite the bleak, barren aspect of the level plain, there was a romantic beauty in the wonderful sunset effects on the distant hills.

In a little log cabin we met Mr. H. E. Bader, the Assistant District Commissioner. At the moment he was in sole charge of the post, his seniors being away on *safari*.

Travellers may not proceed north of Isiolo except without special permits, for both the Northern Frontier Province and Turkana, which comprise more than half the whole area of Kenya, are waterless, inhospitable wastes, where the natives are not yet wholly tamed, and where travelling is a difficult and dangerous undertaking. Bader handed us our permits for the Northern Frontier, and an advice to the Commissioners at Marsabit and Lodwar, asking for permits for us to proceed through the Marsabit area and the Turkana province.

Owing to the sterile nature of the country ahead, travelling with porters was out of the question. The plains, being low-lying are terrifically hot, and water can be obtained at only a few places—in the dry river beds—between Isiolo and Marsabit a distance of 150 miles. It was necessary to engage camels. The search for the necessary animals lost us a day, but we were at length successful in securing the services of a bearded,

turbaned Somali, and two camels, to carry our kit, and four petrol tins of water, which were to last us until the first desert pool was reached. He asked 80s. for the service, and we had to pay, as Isiolo is but on the edge of the camel country, and the beasts are not easy to obtain.

Isiolo looked bare and desolate in the windy dawn of the following day. All night long the east wind had made mournful music, as it swept through the dry grass of the moonlit plain, whistling a high pitched, eerie note among the low thorn bushes, and howling drearily under the raffia palm ceiling of the bare room in which we had taken up our quarters. Daylight had brought no lull. The surrounding hills, grotesque and rugged in outline, enhanced the wildness of the scene, though, in the grey half-light they were invested with a savage beauty that dispelled much of the monotony of the yellow plain. We were ready to push on as soon as the camels arrived, and when they padded up to the house in the wake of their picturesque-looking owner, and squatted down, bellowing protestingly, to be loaded, we felt that a new phase of our journey was about to be entered on. With the paying-off of the last of our boys, we had experienced a feeling of relief. It was as though a tiresome burden had been taken off our minds. We hoped that with camel transport all those worries incidental to *safari* life—the irritating delays experienced in engaging porters at the end of every stage, the irksome task of urging them along when they grew weary, the listening to the annoying reiteration of trifling complaints, and a score of other vexations—would be at an end. A new, and more attractive mode of travelling, lay ahead of us.

The camels, having been loaded with our baggage, and the cases containing the four petrol tins of water, we said good-bye to Bader and started on our northward trek over the Angata Kasut, the yellow-grass, thorn-scrub desert, which was to be our home for many weeks to come.

The foremost impression that we received during that first day with camel transport was that we were free men for the first time in months—free to wander off hunting whenever we pleased, and secure in the knowledge that our *safari* would not halt as soon as we were out of sight—free to loiter behind to enjoy at leisure anything that interested us, and free to go ahead if we pleased. With boys, ever ready to linger whenever one's eyes were off them, that method of travelling was impossible. The camels, however, plodded along at their even pace of a little over three miles an hour, never halting for a spell, or to have their loads eased, and the task of seeing that they got to an agreed upon stopping-place in due course rested not with us, but with the camel-man.

Jim and I went looking for nyama (meat) shortly after we started, but saw only zebra and Grant's gazelle, which we allowed to go unmolested, as we never shot zebra, and local report had it that the gazelle were suffering from some complaint or other, and were not fit for human consumption. Three miles out, we came to a little homestead where we met an English gentleman and his wife who had recently arrived from India on a hunting trip. At their suggestion we went over to a boma about half-a-mile away where their host, Mr. A. Rattray, was engaged in the novel occupation of breaking in Grevy's zebra—beautiful animals found nowhere else in the world except in the Northern Frontier Province of Kenya. They are the largest of all species of Zebra and are almost untamable, but Rattray subdues them sufficiently to enable him to send them down to Nairobi, harnessed, with mules to a wagon. They are then transported by rail and boat to various parts of the world, where they find homes in zoological gardens.

Trekking on, we paused about mid-day in the scanty shade of a sparse thorn bush, and ate our lunch of boiled rice, sitting down in the dust while the camels wafted their foul breath into our faces. On again over the dusty

plain we trekked, and on surmounting a low ridge, ran into large game herds, which included Grevy's zebra, gazelle, and roan antelope. Jim bagged a gazelle, and Umbashi decided to take a risk with the meat. The Somali camel-man assured us the meat was all right, but himself refused a share on account of the fact that he had not cut its throat. The Somali are Mohammedans, and will not touch meat that is killed by the hand of an Infidel, although they do not object to eating game that has been brought down by an Infidel's gun, so long as they are allowed to inflict the *coup-de-grâce* with their knives.

Nine miles further, we crossed a muddy, shallow, swiftly flowing river—the Guaso Nyiro, a palm-fringed stream which flows through hundreds of miles of the driest and dustiest country on earth, and ultimately loses itself in the Lorian Swamp, an unsurpassed locality for elephant hunting, in the eastern section of the Northern Frontier Province. Ploughing through the deep grey dust by the river bank, we came to a fording-place and followed the camels across, keeping a wary eye open for crocodiles, as a native had been taken by one of the brutes at the spot, only the day before. A deserted house on a hill across the river marked the site of Archer's Post, an abandoned police outpost. Jim and I stayed to have a bathe in the stream, and followed the camels up to the vicinity of the house just as the moon was rising. The camels had been off-loaded by a tumble down hut below the abandoned house, and there we camped in the open air—the first of our many camps in the wide wastes of the Angata Kasut. We were to move on again at 3 a.m., for we had decided on dawn and night trekking across that country, owing to the fact that camels do not travel at their best with a hot sun beating down on their backs.

Despite good intentions, it was 4 a.m. before we awoke. A bright moon made a light unnecessary, and Jim and I went down to the river to fill our tins for the next stage of the journey, while Umbashi prepared our

cocoa and porridge. The moon was down and the first rays of the sun were gilding the tops of the isolated hills on the eastern horizon, as we set off, several hours later than we had planned. We were new then to that style of trekking, but made amends later. It was still cool when we started, but we knew that before long it would be uncomfortably hot, so Jim and I struck off in opposite directions to get in some hunting before conditions became too oppressive.

It was glorious being afoot at that hour, out on the desert, with a rifle in one's hand, and we hunted with a zest we had not known for many months. A gazelle led me on for a while, but I refrained from shooting, as we had no use for it. Traversing a stretch of rocky, thorn-covered ground I started up several hares, but missed the only one I fired at. A musk rat then tempted me to try my skill at a small target, and I scored, little of the rat being left as a trophy, after the explosive bullet from the trusty Marlin had struck it. I did not know how Jim was faring, but the freedom from the cares of urging on a disgruntled *safari* left us with a leisure for hunting, which we had never previously known, and we were keen to come in range with some of the big stuff. Pushing into some denser thorn-scrub I heard a sudden loud crashing, and went warily, for I had already seen signs that rhino abounded in the vicinity. A few yards further I came on a well-worn game track—evidently a path used by rhino, zebra and giraffe in going to the water, for their spoor was fresh upon it. I followed it over rough country for a while, and presently came on a giraffe herd, which I did not trouble, as neither of us ever molested those beautiful beasts. The next to come in view was a fine herd of beautifully marked Grevy's zebra, running with a number of Grant's gazelle. Those, too, I let go, for I thought I had seen a rhino on a hill which I was then surmounting. Treading very warily I reached the top, and casting around the thorn scrub below me, saw two large rhino feeding in a cleared space among the bushes, about 200 yards away, just at

the foot of the slope on which I was standing. It was my first sight of rhino in the wilds, and knowing their evil reputation, and remembering the encounter with my first elephant, I crept forward, making as little noise as possible. My rifle was of a small bore, and had never been used on anything as large as a rhino before, so I decided on getting as close as possible before firing. The brutes continued feeding quietly, and I was about to manœuvre for a shot with what I then began to regard as my ridiculously small gun, when I noticed that I had almost run on a third rhino—a huge bull that was standing motionless with his head in a bush, not 30 yards away. He appeared too close to be comfortable, and I retreated a few paces, and took stock of my surroundings. After the elephant incident I was not keen on taking too many chances.

There was not an avenue of escape anywhere if I shot and only wounded the brute, and it charged. I had only soft-nosed bullets with me, and decided it was wiser to climb into a pitiful-looking thorn-bush, that could scarcely be called a tree, before taking my first shot at the worst-tempered denizen of the African bush. Unfortunately, the tree which I selected was covered with small black ants, of a particular voracious species. I tried to balance in a spiny fork of the shrub, holding my rifle in one hand, and endeavouring to remove the ants with the other. I spent a few lively moments clinging with feet and elbows to my precarious perch, and then, having removed most of the ants from the parts I could get at, I took careful aim for the rhino's heart, and fired. It was a direct hit all right, for the old bull snorted angrily, and, breathing like a grampus, lurched heavily into the bushes out of sight. The other two regarded my tree for a moment, while my heart missed several beats, and then they started to lumber towards it. I felt distinctly uncomfortable, but breathed a little more freely when, after going a few paces, they turned and crashed into the bushes into which the wounded bull had disappeared. After waiting a few minutes I



Lumbumbashi lends me a Back



Fording a *Khoir* in the Lesser Swamplands



£30,000 and its Guard: Money going South from El Obeid by Camel.



Faragalla Waterhole.

descended, and crept cautiously towards the thicket. I heard the old bull grunting in an extremely bad-tempered manner from the depths of the thicket, but he did not show himself. I scarcely knew what to do, as I knew that there were two very-much-alive rhino hidden from view in that thicket, in addition to the wounded bull. I decided to reconnoitre, but try as I would, I could obtain no vantage point from which to get a view into the thicket. I hated leaving a wounded animal, so began to edge very carefully, and very silently, into the thicket. Of a sudden I heard a violent rustling just ahead of me, and caught a glimpse of two rhino galloping off in different directions. I penetrated the thicket further, but could see no sign of my quarry, although blood spoor lay thick on the ground. I hunted about for some time, but without results, and was reluctantly compelled to leave the vicinity without seeing any more of the brute for that day, at least. Rhino spoor ran in all directions below the hill, and I again went warily, suspecting that one or other of the beasts might be waiting in ambush in the scrub. The incident was to have its sequel a day-and-a-half later.

Aided by the tock-tock of the wooden camel-bells suspended to the necks of our two animals, I succeeded in locating the *safari* just as it reached Kisimani Well, in the bed of a lugga, or dried-up stream. Jim was with them, and reported that though he had seen a great number of rhino tracks, he had encountered none of the beasts. We rested by the well until 4 p.m., it being too hot for the camels to travel. All the way from Isiolo we had been trekking through swarms and swarms of locust "hoppers"—locusts having turned the whole of that hot, dry country into a breeding ground. The pests had put in an appearance in Kenya and Tanganyika some time during the previous year, and it was reported that 25,000 square miles of Northern Kenya—Turkana and the N.F.P.—were covered with "hoppers", or locusts that had not reached the flying stage of their existence. Kenya's prosperity was gravely threatened. Even at

that time the pests had done thousands of pounds worth of damage, and owing to the lack of transport and water in the northern deserts, the task of attacking them in their breeding ground had hardly been attempted. As I walked down to the well to join the others, the sandy lugga-bed seemed to be rising and falling, so thickly was it covered with the leaping locust swarms. As we lunched the endless stream hopped by, all the locusts, for some reason we could not explain, heading east. Hour after hour they went by, a stream so wide we could not see its limits. Some thousands of them paused in their travels to crawl up the trunks of the few green thorn trees in the lugga, and as we sat there eating our lunch they plopped down in a continuous shower, and we had to move out into the sun to keep them out of our food.

While we were in that lugga our sympathies went out to "J.L." who spent Christmas Eve there in 1925, according to an inscription cut on the trunk of a thorn bush. We did not know who "J.L." was, but our hope was that he had had something better to drink on that day than the sulphurous water from the well. During the afternoon march Jim and I went off in company and encountered the first rhino Jim had seen at close quarters. We had some entertainment playing hide-and-seek with it in the thorn trees, but did not shoot it. We contented ourselves with dropping a few hares for the pot. When we handed over the hares to Umbashi, we were surprised to see that worthy's face fall. We always shared our meat with Umbashi, but on that occasion he would have none of it. All natives have their "taboos"—animals which they will not eat, and which are regarded as sacred by the clan which adopts them as their symbol—but we had never heard our Man Friday say that he regarded any animal as "taboo". With a knowing grin, he explained that he had adopted Kalula, or the hare as his totem, as there was none of the animals to be found in the district in which he lived. Had Umbashi known that one day he was to trek right

across Africa, he would, no doubt, have ensured that his selection of an animal-taboo would result in no hardship to himself, by deciding on a polar-bear as his totem.

It was close upon sunset before we set off to rejoin the line of route. To the traveller in desert places there is a joy, deep and real, in plodding on towards a camping place in the wake of the slowly padding camels, when the cool of the sunset hour has succeeded the scorching heat of day. As we tramped in silence, purple shadows settled down on the scattered crags and domes of distant kopjes, away on the western skyline rendering them restful to the eyes after the blinding glare of the afternoon. As the sun sank lower the heat haze, that had obscured the eastern horizon all day long, softened gradually in tone.

Presently all light faded from the plains, the kopjes, and the sky—scarlet, rose-pink and blue-grey fused into the purple of the shadows that lay over the land. For a while we marched in the darkness, but soon a full moon rose, and we experienced yet another pleasure, desert marching by moonlight. We continued on until the moon was low in the sky, a strangely mixed procession—cloaked and turbaned Somali leading, and dragging at the halter of the ungainly, lumbering camels, followed by a sandalled, bare-headed dusty Rhodesian, with the sun-browned, dusty "Mazungu" (white men) bringing up in the rear. Halting at length among the thorns, the camels were off-loaded, camp fires were lighted, and our stretchers were put up, as usual, under the stars. A light supper washed down by a rationed drink of water followed, and it was then to bed until 3 a.m. Though aware of all its hardships, we felt that we were going to enjoy our trek across the limitless desert spaces.

It seemed to us tired travellers that the moon was making its way across the sky at a more than usually rapid rate, for we appeared to have scarcely settled down to sleep, when we were aroused by the Somali excitedly

calling to us that it was low in the west. A glance at our watches showed that it was nearly 4 a.m. Out we crawled, drank our morning cocoa, and the camels were packed, and we were on the move again within three quarters of an hour. We soon forgot our weariness as the miles slipped by, for trekking in a hot land before the dawn is a wonderful experience. Men may wonder why the inhospitable tracts of the earth are favoured as a home by any people, but the desert nomad knows, and we, who have roamed the deserts in the morning before the sun has risen, and on nights of full moon, also understand. In the pathless deserts there is a pleasure indefinable, but rare, and one must go adventuring there to appreciate it fully. Hills seen before we camped, were soon reached, passed, left far behind—milestones on a trek, that has advanced another stage. Your traveller on the level spaces ever has his eyes fixed on the distant horizon, seeking out physical features—hills, ridges, trees—that will in turn be passed, and may, or may not, be remembered as parts of a setting of a day's experiences. Landmarks call him on. They mean a mid-day halting place, or a camping site at dusk, for it is strange, but true, that some primitive quality in man prevents him from camping, or even halting for any space, out on the middle of the featureless expanse, if there be the slightest variation in the landscape within marching distance.

So we trek on that morning, with a lone, low hill as our probable day's goal—it is the only feature visible across the seared brown desert of thorn. Hares spring up from behind almost every clump of bushes, and tempt us off on the hunt once more, each of us taking different directions, but keeping roughly to the line of our march. I ignore the hares, for I am after the bigger stuff, and my supply of cartridges, which cannot be replenished until Marsabit is reached, has dwindled to a mere handful. Approaching a sandy gully I am suddenly confronted by a magnificent roan antelope. Up goes my rifle, I fire, and the animal falls back with

a startled snort, an expanding bullet having caught it full in the chest at ten yards range. It does not go right down, but recovers itself, comes at me with long curving antlers lowered, but turning before it reaches me, dashes off into the scrub. Knowing that an almost dead antelope will sometimes go for miles before dropping, I give it a second bullet. It sways, blood streams from both its wounds—and then to my chagrin, it bounds away over the ridge.

For an hour I searched for it, but it must have gone a good distance, and my range of vision in the thorn-scrub was very limited. I followed the blood spoor for several hundreds of yards, and then lost it. Ignoring that method of tracking, sure, but much slower than following hoof-prints, I concentrated on keeping in view the grooves that the injured animal had made in the ground as it stumbled away. Unfortunately the bush was full of spoor, and soon I was unable to distinguish that of my quarry from other tracks in the vicinity, and had to abandon the hunt, much as it troubled me to leave a wounded beast. Fresh elephant-tracks then led me on for miles, but they finally turned in the opposite direction to which I was travelling, and I tried a fresh cast. Such are some of the disappointments incidental to hunting and trying to travel forward at the same time. Sometimes a wounded beast would lead us on for half a day or more, and if it went in the wrong direction it was impossible to follow.

An oryx was the next to receive my attention, but my luck that day was vile, and one of the last cartridges I had with me failed to bring it down. It was badly wounded, however, so I followed, and getting close gave it my third last cartridge. Still no luck. It hobbled off, and though I gave chase once more, hoping that it would fall, I only got very hot and tired, without seeing it go down. Finally it got clear away.

Keeping along a dry river bed I started up scores of dik-dik, small gazelle no larger than a hare. Coming on another herd of oryx resting in the sandy river bed, I

was about to take aim when I saw a lion observing the same herd from behind a hummock. The herd was between me and the lion, and as I was working around them to get a nearer peep at Leo, an old buck in the herd gave the alarm, and off they went, the lion also retreating in another direction, and becoming lost to sight before I had crossed the river bed. It had been a sorry morning's hunting, I had expended all save two of my cartridges, and had nothing to show for it. Utterly disconsolate I headed in the direction the camels had taken, and picking up their tracks without much difficulty, finally came on a water-hole in the river bed, around which our small party was camped.

Abandoning our camp to the vultures, late that afternoon, Jim and I took to the scrub along the river course. We wanted meat badly, and when a dik-dik gave me an opportunity I dropped it where it stood, severing its head completely from its body, apparently the only shot certain to kill the hardy game found in those parts. An illustration of how hard animals die was afforded us a few minutes later. A dik-dik sat up at twenty yards from Jim. He fired, and instantly the gazelle dashed off at a great speed. Jim gave chase, and I noticed that the wounded animal appeared to hit the ground with its chest at every leap, but its speed scarcely diminished at all. At length it ran into a thicket of thorn, and Jim succeeded in laying hold of it. We examined it and found that both its front legs had been completely shot off—one was entirely missing, shaved off at the junction with its trunk, and the other was hanging by the merest thread of skin—and in addition the unfortunate animal had had its chest ripped open. We could scarcely believe our eyes. If such a small animal could withstand such a shock and make off, using only its hind legs as a means of propulsion, it was small wonder that larger species, which we had shot through a vital spot, had been able to get away and travel great distances before dropping dead. We felt

somewhat disgusted with hunting for a long while after that, but meat was vitally necessary to eke out our restricted diet.

The water-hole we camped at that night was, so the Somali informed us, a dangerous spot because of the lions, elephant and rhino that came there at night to drink. As we made our way to it, a cloud of guinea-fowl rose up into the trees, and Jim brought down a couple with his rifle. They were by far the prettiest game birds we had seen. They had an ornate neck-ruff of rich blue feathers, and their plumage, very much like that of an ordinary guinea-fowl in its markings, was much more gorgeous in colour. They were, we learned later vulturine guinea-fowl. We made a break of thorn bushes at one side of the lugga, and lighted fires to keep off the animals. Our first nocturnal visitor arrived just as we were turning in—a hyena that slunk down to the water hole, but made off when we shot a beam from the torch at him.

From a dreamless slumber we were aroused in the small hours by the Somali jabbering excitedly in swahili. We sat up, and heard something very heavy crashing through the bush a few yards from the thorn boma. Within the boma itself all was confusion; the camels, which had been hobbled by bending up one of their forelegs and roping it securely, in the manner employed by the nomads of that region, were leaping around, going perilously close to our stretchers, and bawling wildly. The Somali was endeavouring to quieten them, and at the same time was yelling to us to beware of Tembo, or Faru (rhino), and we gathered that an elephant or a rhino—the Somali was not sure which—had burst in on top of us. Jim said it was the third alarm he had had that night, but I had slept on through the din that had arisen when a rhino tried to get through our boma to the water, and was scared off by the bawling of the camels. I had also failed to be disturbed by the yell Jim emitted when Umbashi rather unceremoniously aroused him to point out a marauding

hyena, that had approached too close for Umbashi's peace of mind.

We turned out in the moonlight, about 3 a.m., and on going to collect the nyama, which we had placed for safety along a branch of a tree arching over our beds, we found that a leopard, or some other member of the cat tribe, had carried off half of one dik-dik, and one of the guinea-fowl while we slept. Investigating the vicinity we found that in the darkness we had camped down on a rhino track. It was small wonder that our slumbers had been disturbed.

As the camels padded silently across the sand in the wake of the Somali, Jim and Umbashi bringing up in the rear, I rose from lacing my boots, and walked across the camping site to pick up my rifle. The fire had died down and I made out a couple of hyenas scuttling away from beneath the tree, against which the rifle was resting. The brutes could never wait until our camps were abandoned, but always began to slink in almost at the moment that we started to move out. I knew that scores of eyes were watching me from the thicket, waiting for me to go, before slinking in to grab up any morsels of meat left behind, but apart from the two that disappeared none of them presented itself as a target. Hyenas, though perhaps the most venturesome of all nocturnal marauders, have yet more cunning than the rest, and it is extraordinarily difficult to get a shot at them.

A morning breeze sprang up as I followed the tock-tock-tock of the camel bell through the scrub, and the golden moon, then hanging low over a western ridge, paled as the east flushed a brighter gold. Dawnlight began to flood the sky, and the world of thorn bush was bathed in the half light preceding the dawn. The air was dry and cool, and good to breathe, and almost imperceptible scents of dry shrubs and parched grass were wafted to the nostrils by the light breeze. The desert never seems quite desolate. What better on that rare morning than to tramp on alone, and

see what a stroll over those distant ridges would bring forth?

A rhino track led down into a lugga, or dry sandy watercourse. Keeping a sharp look-out to left and right, I followed. Presently the lugga passed into a gorge and I was walking between rocky banks that rose up sheer for about forty feet. I confined my attentions to watching the track ahead. On the left, some fifty yards on, the bank fell away and I scanned some huge boulders, scattered about on the sloping ground, very carefully. A rhino might lurk behind any of them, and be quite hidden. Drawing nearer those boulders my attention was diverted to a troop of baboons, barking excitedly around a depression in the lugga bed. The indications were that the depression contained water—a real discovery in that region—and I hurried forward to obtain a peep into it. Just as the baboons scattered, I heard a vicious snort, and something seemed to contract inside me. By one of the rocks a cloud of dust shot up in the air, and out of it hurtled a massive black form that bore down on me with startling speed. The charge had come, and I was trapped in a narrow gorge!

Aware that there was not sufficient space for me to attempt to try out the Africans' formula for such emergencies—waiting until the rhino is all but on you and then stepping quickly aside—I turned and ran, my pulses pounding like battery stamps. In a split second the sound of rushing pads, and a mighty snorting, warned me to act—and that at once—if I did not wish my mangled remains to decorate the bed of that lugga. I leaped sideways, landed on a piece of rock protruding from the wall above me, and clutching a ledge, hauled myself out of the path of the charging mountain. A cloud of dust went past. I clambered slowly up to the top of the bank, and sat down on a rock to think about it all. That rhino-dodging formula is quite a sound one, but I never wish to give it another trial.

Casting about I found that there were scores of rhino tracks—all of them freshly used—winding down from

the high ground which I had reached, to the lower ground in the direction from which the rhino had charged. There were many huge rocks scattered about, and I went very carefully, in case another of the beasts might be lurking behind any one of them. Suddenly I saw something out of the corner of my eye which brought me up with a shock. I had been carefully surveying a clump of rocks on my right, and had nearly stumbled over a rhino which was lying down in the path on my left!

I took stock of him, and saw that he was either dead, or pretending to be so. He was only about two yards from me, and as he did not move, I decided to take a rash chance, and walking up to him, gave him a kick. He was dead all right—or I would have been—and I saw to my satisfaction that he had a fine set of horns, which I judged to weigh about ten pounds—and rhino horn is worth £2 10s. a pound. I inspected the corpse, and found that it had been shot in the shoulder, having apparently died the day before. I claimed it as the beast I had shot at, shortly after crossing the Guaso Nyiro. I tried to cut off the horn, but realising that it would be a long job, I left it, and set off to overtake the others, intending to return after lunch. Crossing the rocky ridges, I luckily came on the camels, and called to the driver to come across. We camped some distance from the water-hole, in the lugga, and Jim and I returned to the task of removing the horn. After labouring for some time, we were making back to the encampment for our lunch, when I saw a rhino poke its head from behind a boulder. I drew back quietly, and warned Jim, who was a little in the rear, and we advanced carefully in the direction in which I had seen it. Clambering over the top of the rock, I found that the rhino had made off, and we did not see it again, though we had to move very warily in that neighbourhood, as there was a labyrinth of rhino tracks in the vicinity, and it was evidently a favourite haunt of the beasts. After lunch, Jim and I took off the horn, and a huge strip of

hide—to be used for repairing our boots—and hot arduous work it was, under that blazing equatorial sun. The task completed, we drove the baboons away from the water-hole, and had a bath in the few pints of water it contained. We had intended to camp at Merille water-hole that night, but the camel driver could not be persuaded to continue, as he held that it would be too dangerous to sleep near the water, on account of the number of wild beasts that visited it during the night. We slept some distance from it and moved on again at 3 a.m.

A little over an hour's trekking brought us to the palm-fringed Merille lugga at dawn. It was an unforgettable sight, that small camel caravan wending its way down the white sand between the motionless palms, with the sun rising in a flush of gold behind them, and catching the brightly-coloured robes of the camel-man. After the monotony of the unending miles of dead grey thorn-bush, the clean, gleaming river sand, with its fringe of greenery, was pleasant to behold at that early hour. Soon, we knew, the sun would be pouring down its scorching rays from a cloudless blue sky, but in the shade of the thickly clustering palms, with a soft carpet of yielding white sand under-foot, and a rose-tinted gold-splashed sky overhead, heat and dust appeared as trials of a day long past.

The camels had not had much grazing for some days, and the Somali said it would be wise to rest at the spot until late afternoon, as there was little majani (grazing) to be had for the remainder of the journey to Marsabit. Accordingly, we made our camp by the lugga, and settled down to while away a pleasant day. It was a restful spot after the heat of the plain. Baboons and monkeys barked and chattered as they swung from palm to palm; strange birds uttered their weird cries as they circled over the pool; a faint breeze set up a rustling in the palm-fronds, but nothing else disturbed the quiet of that restful oasis, until the crash of Jim's rifle broke the spell, and a bevy of squawking guinea-fowl broke

cover, and dashed across our cleared camping space. The undergrowth between the palms was teeming with vulturine guinea-fowl. Until lunch we lounged about in the shade, writing, or dozing, as the mood took us. As I scribbled, a little gazelle pattered out of the thicket, and stood a few feet from me, gazing uncertainly all about it, and pricking its ears to catch the slightest sound. It appeared almost reassured, and advanced a step or two nearer, when its startled gaze fell on me. It uttered a frightened whistle, shot up into the air and was off. Guinea-fowl scuttled past in droves, and occasionally baboons burst in on our retreat, to fly barking and screeching when they observed us, but no big game paid us a visit.

At the end of that evening's trek we reached Lasamas, a number of rock pools in a narrow lime-stone belt, about 9 p.m.

Either because he was wearied, or because, as he said, his camels really did need more food, the Somali urged on us the necessity for allowing the beasts to graze there throughout the following day. That day was a scorcher, and after a bathe in one of the pools—our first real bath for days—Jim and I sprawled out on our stretchers, in the shade of a large thorn growing among the lime-stone rocks, and enjoyed a really glorious loaf. We were both thoroughly tired out through lack of sleep, and dozing in that cool spot, fanned by a soft breeze, was to us, then, the most delightful experience we could imagine. Camels and donkeys, shepherded by Somali tribesmen from the far north, came to drink after the three days' waterless journey from Marsabit, as we lay there. They commenced arriving early in the day, and by mid-afternoon there were several hundreds of the beasts, and quite a large number of natives, at the camping place.

Our siesta was disturbed by Umbashi, who came running to announce that a cloud of dust was advancing in our direction from the south, and a little later six motor trucks, comprising the K.A.R. convoy, arrived

from Meru. Captain Hughes and a K.A.R. Transport officer, named Reece, were in charge of the party, the remainder of the personnel being Somali askari. Our baggage was on one of the trucks, and we took out some milk and tea, the supply we had carried from Meru being almost exhausted, owing to the unquenchable thirsts we had acquired in the course of the hot journey. I also took the opportunity of replenishing my ammunition supply. Hughes and Reece invited us to join them at lunch, and we were shown what a good native cook could do in circumstances which would leave a European chef helpless. There were three courses, and Jim and I fancied that we had never sampled a more tasty meal. Both Hughes and Reece were really remarkable shots, and they filled in the few hours they remained with us by an exhibition of trick shooting at carrion-crows and matches. When they left us they took on Umbashi with two tins of water, to be dropped about fifteen miles on. Two further tins of the precious fluid they took to drop thirty-seven miles ahead, as there were no more water holes between Lasamas and Marsabit. We followed shortly after they had left, covering fourteen of the dreariest miles of the whole stretch, under a sun that baked the earth to a temperature that must have been in the vicinity of 120 degrees. Even the miserable thorn-bush thinned out as we put the miles behind us, and game disappeared entirely. Except for a few dead-looking hills in the distance, and sparse clumps of thorn-bramble dotted about on the scorched plain, there was nothing to relieve the bareness of the desert for as far as the eye could see. Spirals of red dust, swirling away to be lost in the shimmering blue haze that hemmed us in like a surrounding wall of superheated smoke, accentuated the dreariness of the arid region through which we toiled. There was nothing to rest our eyes on, nothing of greenery, nothing of freshness—only smoky-grey sky, hazy blue horizon, and parched, black, lava-strewn hills on which nothing grew—and the heat was almost unbearable. Hughes

and Reece had agreed to leave our water and our henchman at One Tree Camp, and when we reached the spot at sundown, we found it as desolate and bare as its name suggested. Fourteen miles without a halt through that furnace left us with little energy, and pleased, indeed, we were to find our stretchers set up under the lone tree, and Umbashi busily engaged over the teapot. We pulled off our dusty clothes, and stretched out on our beds, glad to be at the end of the tiring journey, and feeling very sorry for the unfortunate camel driver, on whom we had gained at least two hours. He arrived in at 9 p.m., thoroughly wearied out, and we dozed off with his curses against the heat falling on our ears.

Twelve-thirty a.m.! Excited yelling, and a rapid flow of incoherent Swahili set us leaping from our stretchers as if we were working on springs, believing that some nocturnal prowler had wandered under our camping tree. It was only our stern task-master the Somali, however, rousing the camp in his usual boisterous manner, and telling us it was time to *safari*. He had apparently mistaken the time. We dozed off again, and at 2.30 a.m. the commotion started. The fellow had lost his bearings, and was under the delusion that the rising moon was setting. There was no further sleep after that, and we turned out, still ineffably wearied, to begin the rigours of another day.

Our progress across the Kasut Desert was slightly more endurable that day, for a few clouds in the sky somewhat tempered the intense heat of the sun's rays. Apart from the dirty brackish water we carried in the four petrol tins on the camels, we would get nothing further for drinking, cooking or washing purposes for two further days, if we failed to locate the two tins left by the wayside by the convoy. The great heat and the saltiness of the water gave us prodigious thirsts during the course of the march, and we were unable to alleviate them until we camped, as the water we carried was inaccessible once the camels were loaded. Having endured some discomfort from that fact in the earlier

stages of the journey, we had taken the precaution of boiling some water before we left One Tree Camp, and had filled our water-bag. We were not destined to profit by that forethought, however, as we had only gone a mile or so through the darkness when the load to which the water-bag was tied, slipped from the camel's back, and most of the precious fluid was lost. That was the first time we experienced the annoyance consequent on the loads slipping from the camels, but we had been fortunate, for it was almost a daily occurrence in the months that followed.

Native nomads put in an appearance during the course of that day's march, for we were entering the country of the Borani, a miserable folk, who roam with their flocks of camels and goats across the plains, and over the plateau of Marsabit. About mid-day the outline of Marsabit Mountain showed up through the haze ahead. The first sign that we were approaching the haunts of Europeans was a mile post stuck in the sand, at the edge of the track the convoy had made in passing. A finger post pointing across the desert to the west indicated that Balessa (Mt. Kulal), North Hor and Serima, on Lake Rudolph, lay 132 miles away across the barren, waterless wastes, although there were no tracks indicating that any had taken the route in recent times. Camp that day was made in the dust under a low thorn-bush. When our camels came up with us, we learned that our precious water-bag had disappeared—stolen by a Borani so our Somali informed us. It was a real loss in such a place, and we had to content ourselves with the then muddy contents of the tins. A searing east wind blew the fine red dust into our food and filled our eyes and nostrils while we remained in that uninviting spot, and the shade afforded by the thorn was scanty in the extreme. Great ugly vultures gathered about us as we ate, and we had hardly moved on before they swooped down in clouds on the morsels of meat we had left. It was at the end of that day that we expected to locate the water taken on by the convoy,

and Jim and I pushed ahead of the camels, keeping an eye on the tracks, hoping to find the cache before darkness set in. At sunset we had failed to locate it, but we pushed on until it was too dark to see further. Pitch darkness came on, and we paused to wait for the camels to come up. At the end of an hour Umbashi showed up through the darkness, greatly out of breath, for he had been running. He was somewhat incoherent, but we at length managed to learn from him that the rascally Somali had taken it on himself to change the direction of his march several miles back, and had made off for a hill miles away from where we were, leaving us, without food and water, to fend for ourselves.

There was nothing for it, but to set off to try and locate him—a difficult task in the darkness. The desert thereabouts was strewn with boulders, and we stumbled along, cursing silently, what time Umbashi poured a plaintive tale of woe into our ears relating to the efforts he had made to persuade the Somali to follow us. Once we were brought up suddenly as a heavy animal made a rush towards us through the grass, about a yard in front of our noses. It was too dark to make out exactly what it was, but we stopped as one man, and Jim and I brought our rifles to our shoulders, and fired to scare off whatever it was. We did not hear it move again, and it was apparently watching us from very near at hand. Feeling extremely uncomfortable, we pushed on, and were not molested, though we were fully persuaded that it was a lion that we had roused. On over stones, down gullies, and ravines we toiled—for we were then in the foothills of Marsabit Mountain—cooee-ing as we went, to avoid passing our camels in the darkness. No answering calls came back, and our vituperation became incessant and vile, for if we failed to locate them, we would be marooned a long day's tramp from food and water. We fell silent after a while and then Jim stopped suddenly, swearing that he could smell camels. Umbashi had preceded us for some distance, and as he had seen nothing I thought



Foo Tired to Get Up!



Early Morning at Hamra Waterpool, Esh Shuqaiq.



Fast Riding Camels



An Arab

Jim must have been mistaken. However, he cooeed, and to our relief, an answer was yelled from the darkness, ten yards behind us. It had been a near thing, for had not Jim smelled the camels, we would most certainly not have seen them again until Marsabit was reached.

We found the scoundrel of a Somali wrapped up in his rugs, with our loads stacked around him as a protecting wall. We cursed him strongly. Having no matches, he had been unable to light a fire, and by the time we had one going and the stretchers up, we were all too tired to prepare food, and so retired supperless. We got some consolation from the situation by dragging Mahommed out of his blankets, and making him shift his foul-smelling camels to a decent distance from our beds. It was then about midnight, and we had a dawn start before us and thirty miles of hot marching to do the following day.

We started the last day of the stage to Marsabit ravenously hungry, for we would not delay our start longer than to wait for Umbashi to prepare us a plate of oatmeal. After trekking a couple of miles, we again ran across the tracks of the convoy. At that moment we sighted a fine herd of oryx, about 400 yards away, and I succeeded in dropping one at 300 yards—most game hunters drop their quarry at ranges of three hundred yards and upwards, if reports speak truly, but that was about my best effort up to that stage, and I felt quite pleased about it. It was a magnificent specimen, and contrary to our usual practice, I decided to carry off the horns as a trophy, besides such of the meat as we required. We were just moving away, leaving the carcase to the waiting vultures, when we sighted the K.A.R. convoy returning from Marsabit. We went over, and yarned a while with Reece. He told us that the water he had carried on was resting by the side of the track only a couple of hundred yards from where we were standing, but as the camels had gone on we did not collect it.

Despite the rating he had received the evening before, the old Somali again went off in a direction different from that which we had indicated, and after tracking our camels for a few miles we became bewildered by scores of cross paths made by the beasts of the local Borani, and eventually lost track of our own camels. Jim and I separated in the course of our efforts to re-discover the tracks, and lost each other. After wandering on for some miles I discovered a track winding up the dry scrub-covered slopes of Marsabit Mountain, and decided to follow it, as I then had no idea of the whereabouts of either Jim or the Somali and his camels. Around bare conical hills, down rocky ravines, across upland plains of crumbling, dusty, red soil, and yellow grass, I went, climbing higher and higher with every mile. Boran villages, the first native encampments seen since we had commenced the crossing of the Angata Kasut, appeared, isolated groups of thatched huts clinging to the sides of barren slopes. I held a few of the scantily clad Boran in conversation for a while, endeavouring to obtain some tidings of our camels, but as they had a very slight acquaintance with the Kiswahili tongue and I knew no Borani, we made little progress. However, I gleaned that Marsabit lay straight ahead along the track I was following, and decided to push on, and to await the others there. It meant a long day's tramp without water or food, and I had been hungry and thirsty when the search for the camels first started. After about thirteen miles through the great heat the terrible dryness in my throat made me forget that I was very hungry, and I was beginning to realise afresh what the agonies of real thirst in a desert land were like, when three native women crossed my path. They were not over-clean specimens. They were dressed in skins that were extraordinarily greasy, and they themselves reeked of grease, from their heads of long crinkly hair to their unsandalled feet. I asked for water, and one decrepit old hag, who kept her palm outspread over her features produced a small leather gourd from a pouch that was

concealed under the hides covering her perspiring back. I took it, and poured down my throat the vilest-tasting water I had ever drunk. It gave me the impression that it had been smoked for weeks over a fire of unpleasant smelling wood, but I pronounced it very good, and indeed would not have thought so badly of it, if the old hag who had passed me the gourd had not uncovered her features for an instant, and revealed a most repellent sight; the horrible ravages of a foul disease being vividly in evidence. A little further on a Boran warrior offered, speaking in Swahili, to guide me by a shorter route to Marsabit post. I followed, and a mile or two further on he asked me if I would like a cold bath. A cold bath in that parched waterless land! . . . I wondered if I had understood him, and asked where it was to be had. He led me up a gorge between two hills, where something in the nature of forest vegetation was beginning to make an appearance, and after climbing for a few hundred yards, we came on two shaded rock pools. Two natives were washing their leather garments in one, but the other, a deep pool of reddish water, was comparatively unsullied. I stripped and plunged in. Never had cold water felt quite so exhilarating. Leaving the pool, we took a path that followed round the base of a lofty hill, the upper slopes of which, curiously enough, were covered with grey-beard forest, that I had thought was indigenous to higher and better watered country, and came presently in sight of a collection of Indian "dukas" (stores). Marsabit at last!

Mr. Sharpe, the District Commissioner, was away on *safari*, but I made my way to his house, and had his boy prepare me tea, half-a-dozen cups of which I drained in twice as many minutes.

Marsabit is a wonderful spot. In the middle of a desert it has the advantage of altitude, being situated at nearly 5,000 feet—3,000 feet above the general level of the Angata Kasut—and consequently has a much more plentiful rainfall. Sharpe has utilised the springs of clear water that ooze from the hills behind his home to

irrigate his gardens, and a restful, pleasantly green oasis he has brought into being. His house-boy brought me a deck chair out on to the creeper-covered porch, and there I rested an hour, watching the inquisitive birds hopping in and out of the garden on to the cool verandah, and feeling that the world was a smiling place after all. I guessed that Jim must have located the camels and stopped for lunch along the road, and so did not expect him in until about 7 or 8 o'clock in the evening. Although I knew that Hughes, whom I very much wanted to see, was encamped in the K.A.R. lines across the grassy parade ground, a mere quarter of a mile away, I could not summon up the energy to leave that chair, until a full hour had passed.

I found his tent among the trees at the edge of a deep forest, just beyond the K.A.R. lines which, with the few dukas and the District Officer's Boma, make up the Marsabit outpost. Hughes came in from a hunt in the forest just as I arrived, and we repaired to his tent, where we attacked a substantial afternoon tea, and discussed the plans for our trek in company.

Hughes said that the sixty camels he was waiting for had not been all gathered in, and a couple of score that had been rounded up were thirty miles away. He was consequently unable to say when he would be able to start, and it appeared that we would not be able to accompany him after all, because of the loss of time involved.

Jim arrived about 8 p.m., having acted as I had thought, and had come on ahead of the camels. Neither the camel-man, nor Umbashi who had been left to accompany him in, arrived that night, so Jim and I had perforce to make ourselves comfortable on the floor of Hughes's tent, where we slept the sleep of the utterly wearied.

Morning tea brought in by Hughes's orderly was a luxury that we had never anticipated being able to enjoy south of Khartoum, but there it was, and we revelled in the luxury of being waited upon.

Our camels came in about 9 a.m., and for the first time we set up the tent and fly brought from Nairobi. It was a very picturesque setting for a camp, there by the edge of the deep forest, and it was the most comfortable home of our own we had possessed since the walk started. From that day we commenced a style of living that we had never previously known in the whole journey. By way of a tent-warming we invited Hughes over to dinner in the evening. I baked, and the remainder of the culinary arrangements were taken over by Jim, aided by Umbashi. Our guest supplied his boy as waiter, and provided the table napery and cutlery and altogether, that dinner, judged on *safari* standards and with allowances made for the disadvantages under which we worked, was a masterpiece—surpassing by far anything we had previously attempted. Umbashi beamed like a gratified child when he was allowed to desert his camp fire and bring in the tea. It was a great success.

We decided that a week's delay at Marsabit would not be excessive, and so decided to wait until Hughes had collected the camels, and was ready to move on. We spent most of the time hunting and idling away the days, and getting better acquainted with the Somali askari who were to accompany us on the trek to Lodwar.

One night Hughes did the honour by inviting Marsabit's European population to a dinner served out under the stars, by the edge of the forest. There were four guests—Sharpe, but that day arrived back from *safari*; Lieut. McGowan, in charge of the Police section at Marsabit; and Wilson and I. Served on camp tables around a blazing bonfire by the edge of the forest, that dinner was one that would have reflected credit on a hotel chef in a large city. It is really surprising how native cooks can rise to such an occasion. Stories—new and old—mostly well told, kept us entertained until the late hours, and we sought our couches thoroughly content with a day well spent.

No camels had been brought in by the end of our fourth day in Marsabit, and as we had finished most of our preparations, we had a rather easy time of it.

We were in need of the services of extra camel-leaders, and when Sharpe informed us that there was a hardened rogue in the township, released from the chain-gang that day, we decided that he would fill one of the vacancies. Hughes's askari were all what might be termed "hard cases" and we ourselves had found renegades serviceable fellows in hard places, so that when Sharpe added to the prospective recruit's references the statement that some years before he had been concerned in an affair in which several natives were killed—some by the hand of the hardened one—we took the information as something of a recommendation. There was stern work ahead of all of us, and we required recruits of the type who could put up with intense hardship cheerfully. When the beauty was brought for our inspection, we saw at once he was fit for anything. We had never seen a more villainous looking fellow. Beetle-browed, heavy-jowled, shifty-eyed, he was a "plug-ugly", of the unloveliest order. His huge muscles, thick-set stature, and great length of arm, indicated that he was possessed of brute strength above the average. He said he hailed from the desert on the Abyssinian border. Asked if he wished to go with us, with the "gameer" (camels) to Lodwar, he replied that he supposed it would be all right, as if he stayed at Marsabit he would almost certainly find himself in the chain-gang before long. We engaged him on the spot.

Passing back to our camp, we saw three prisoners, chained together, shelling mealie-cobs, under the supervision of an armed guard. Hughes stopped to speak with one of them, who, he told us, was Bakuli—a famous native hunter, and a great character, whom Hughes had thought of taking along with him, but who had spoiled that plan by poaching three rhino and getting caught for it. He was a hardened old sinner, absolutely fearless, and a wonder at tracking big game. He had a habit of

getting in amongst it, as if he were a circus hand moving around among his charges. He is renowned in those parts amongst hunters for a remark he once made, or rather mumbled, as he possesses no palate to his mouth. He was requested by a white hunter to exercise a little caution when getting close to a mob of restless buffalo. He retorted, "*Mimi hapana gober ngombe!*" ("I am not afraid of cattle"). When Hughes sympathised with him in his bondage, he merely grunted, "*Shauri M'ungu!*" ("It is the work of God").

On the morning of the seventh day of our stay, we received the gratifying tidings that our camels were on the way in. Sure enough, shortly after 4 p.m., we saw them coming over a ridge in a cloud of dust, and within an hour the beasts were bawling and grunting in an open plain within the township. There were about seventy of them, gathered by the tribesmen, under the supervision of police-boys from Marsabit, from all over the western side and north western corner of the N.F.P., some of them having come in from a distance of 150 miles. There were only forty-two of them available for Hughes, however, as the remainder were wanted for patrol duty at Marsabit. For the next couple of hours Hughes was busily engaged selecting his quota. He planned to leave with the forty-two camels on the following afternoon, and pick up the remaining eighteen at Serima, on the shores of Lake Rudolph.

In the darkness that night, the askari lines about our camp presented an unforgettable sight. Scores of camp-fires, gleaming yellowly, lighted up the wide parade ground, where the camels, looking ghostly in the fire-light, were grunting and stamping in their ordered ranks. Sentinels, armed with rifles and fixed bayonets, passed from fire to fire, and all up and down the lines there were scenes of great activity and bustle, for askari, syces and camel-leaders were each and all engaged in the multiple tasks to be carried out in preparation for the start on the morrow. Somali N.C.O.'s shouted rapid commands from the darkness, groups of struggling

camel-men battled with refractory camels, and sentries now and then snapped out challenges as curious natives from the surrounding locations ventured too close to the line. It was as though the camp were engaged in preparations for a move into battle, and, indeed, the camels, at least, were destined for active service before many weeks were passed. At the end of their long trek to Lokitaung they were to be employed in action against the massing Merille tribesmen, beyond Mt. Kaiserin Pass, which Lokitaung guards.

After their week of inactivity the troops were restless for action, and they threw themselves into their tasks with an energy that was commendable. Hughes closed the day's activities by shooting at prowling hyenas that ventured around our tents, somewhere about the ungodly hour of midnight. With the roar of his gun echoing around the hills, the occasional trumpeting of an elephant shattering the forest silence, the hyenas' howling, the bawling of the camels, and the murmur of conversation from the askari lines, it was long before we slumbered.

CHAPTER XVI

WITH THE PATROL TO RUDOLPH

REVEILLE—MARCH FROM MARSABIT—A NATIVE ALLIANCE—WINDY
WASTES—ACROSS THE KAROLI TO MT. KULAL—THROUGH THE LAVA
BELT—A FINE SHOT—BY THE DESERT POOLS—THE HYENAS' VICTIM
—DESERT DWELLERS—LAKE RUDOLPH

AT 3 A.M. a shouted warning from one of the sentinels aroused us. We sprang from our stretchers, and saw the askari dragging our baggage clear of our tent on to the open parade ground. At the same instant we became aware of a loud crackling, and guessed that a fire had broken out. Dashing outside we found that our sleeping quarters were threatened by a huge tree that was blazing fiercely just behind our tent.

Umbashi had had his cooking fire at its base, and the fire had climbed up the hollow trunk, and taken a strong hold. It looked as if it would crash down on us at any moment. Assisted by some of the askari we pulled up our tent pegs and shifted our camp and gear from the danger zone, as quickly as possible, and then joined the remainder of the company, who had also been turned out, in the task of fighting the blaze. There was a grave danger of the fire spreading and igniting the whole forest, as M'tero trees, which predominated in the forest, burn like tinder, even when green. There was but a limited supply of water available, and that was exhausted before the fire was out. There was nothing we could do after that, but stand by and wait until it had burned itself out. It was some hours before the burning tree crashed, and then all hands set to, and extinguished the blaze before it had a chance to spread

far. Had sentries not been posted, that tree would have ended the career of either Jim or me, as when it fell, it crashed directly across the spot on which our tent had been standing.

Packing and loading took up the remainder of the morning. We lunched with Sharpe, and early in the afternoon our *safari* began its long desert trek to Lodwar. It was the most considerable *safari* with which we had been associated, and once we were well started it was strung out for nearly a mile, as we wound through the hills. Hughes and Jim and I went ahead, accompanied by Hughes's orderly and gun-bearer, one, Matafari, reputed by Hughes to be "bug-house", and the plague of his life, but really a fine, obliging type of fellow, whose well-meant, but frequently blundering, efforts to serve, amused us greatly in the weeks that followed. Behind us came the camels, strung out in single file, and divided into six sections, each led by a camel-leader, and watched over by two armed syces. The askari took their places as camel-leaders, or marched along at ease on either side of the column, their arms, uniforms and accoutrements spick and span, and a sight to behold.

In the rear followed two gentlemen who showed themselves not the slightest bit impressed by the pomp and panoply of a small army on the move. They were two with minds above such mundane matters. Umbashi, given complete charge of our cooking arrangements since our arrival at Marsabit, had found a twin soul in the taciturn Omari, Hughes's cook. They kept their distance at the rear of the *safari*, driving before them a flock of goats and sheep, which were to serve as the caravan's meat ration.

For the first five miles we followed the road by which we had entered Marsabit, and then struck north-west, down the rocky, lava-strewn side of the mountain, heading for Koroli, a series of warm soda springs on the Koroli desert, about midway to the Lake shore. The path was a nightmare for man and beast, loose boulders littering it in scattered heaps, so that the camels found

it difficult to find stepping-places. Two miles of the descent brought us to the mountain foot, and, as the sun was then sinking, we selected a patch of yellow grass, less boulder-strewn than the surrounding wastes, and camped for the night, between a rocky lava ridge and a mighty desolate-looking hill. As we filed on to the camping site a half-gale sprang up, and went howling down the wild ravine, screaming a weird, unearthly tune among the thorn bushes. All night long the furious gusts whistled around us, and so violent was the wind that, in order to keep my blanket from being whisked off me, I slept with two small boulders pinning it down at the foot. It was far from comfortable, but it was effective, in its way. The country around Marsabit was teeming with wild turkeys, and on that night, and all succeeding days, for a month to come, we were at least never short of poultry.

The wind did not drop by morning, and the air had turned extremely chilly. We had slept but little, and turned out still tired and very wearied of the incessant gusts that threatened to blow away anything movable, the instant we let go of it. We huddled about the small fires while the camels were being saddled and packed, and moved away about 6 a.m.

Away across the desert we could see the dim outline of Mt. Kulal, and struck a course for it, our compass direction being still roughly north-east. Threading our way slowly across the lava rocks, we left the last of the bare, conical hills about the foot of the mountain behind, and entered on the level thorn scrub that stretched away to join the grey sandy expanse of the Koroli desert proper. Ahead, it appeared that there was not even a shrub growing, so, after covering about eight miles, we decided to camp, before the limits of the thorn scrub were reached, so that the camels might browse on what feed there was before commencing the foodless stage directly ahead.

As we prepared to turn in that night the wind, which had been blowing steadily since the previous evening,

increased to gale force, and we found it necessary to rope our blankets to our stretchers, a procedure which we were compelled to follow frequently while we were in that country.

Four a.m., and the wind howling across the lava, and roaring down the shallow gully in which we were camped, sounded our reveille. The morning was again bitterly cold, and we felt little inclined to turn out into that world of wind and dust. However, the boys had been astir for nearly an hour; camels were squealing and bawling in protest at being loaded, and the syces were waiting for our camp gear to be ready for packing. Neither the camels nor goats had had a drop of water since leaving Marsabit, and there was a further twenty miles of lava rock to be covered before water of any description could be obtained. Then it would be only from the soda pools at Koroli, and we ourselves would have to go a further four days before we could replenish the drinking water in our barramills (small flat water tanks). We were on a ration of two gallons a day per man, and the boys were on half that quantity. Washing and shaving had to be dispensed with.

Sunrise beauties passed from our minds quickly after the first hour of marching. The wind dropped, the heat struck down on the rocks, and was reflected back into our faces like a withering breath. Nowhere was there anything suggestive of Nature's more bountiful mood—not a green shrub, a patch of grass, nor anything to relieve the blinding glare of a fierce sun. Miles and miles of red-brown or black lava boulders—boulders over which men and animals had to pick their every step—and nothing more. A few Grant's gazelle, wandering in that parched wilderness for some reason not to be explained, tempted Hughes to shoot. At a fair range he missed twice—an unusual thing for him—but when they had ambled off to a range of 500 yards (measured later) he achieved the finest shot we had ever been privileged to witness, dropping his quarry like a stone

—a really magnificent shot, and one which is seldom seen, though not so rarely heard of.

All day we marched across the lava, and late in the afternoon came to the edge of a sea of white sand, that commenced abruptly at the foot of a low scarp, marking the edge of the lava belt. Sand-level was about 200 feet below the plateau which we had been traversing. From the elevation of the lava field we could see the gleaming expanse of desert sand extending away to the north, south, and west, as far as the horizon. Along its eastern fringes it was cut into by lava promontories—long black ridges running out for miles, like low mountain ranges jutting out into a level sea. About a mile across the desert, we saw what we had first taken to be a mirage, but which on closer scrutiny proved to be a wide expanse of shining water. We had reached the Koroli water pools. How good they looked—and how very much out of place in that desolate setting!

With the exception of a line of pitiful-looking thorn-bushes, extending from directly below us, to the water's edge, there was not a growing thing visible in all that extensive waste of sand and shingle. The descent to the sand-level was by a precipitous, boulder-strewn, animal-track. It was a difficult feat for the heavily-laden camels to make their way down, as boulders, on which they placed their pads, slipped from beneath them, and the beasts were hard put to it to save themselves from rolling to the bottom, loads and all. They needed a lot of persuasion to induce them to make the attempt, and it was some time before the caravan was well started on the descent. For a time the whole string was held up by the cussedness of a camel in the middle of the string. Just as the beasts, to which he was attached, were negotiating a particularly difficult section, and were slipping and stumbling badly, he noticed a hurricane lamp, that Umbashi had inadvertently left standing on a rock beside the track. The brute stopped and made a side kick at it. He missed, but that camel was a stickler, and regardless of the fact that his fellows were more or

less suspended on the side of a rock wall, he held back, nearly jerked the leaders off their balance, and aimed a second vicious kick at the unoffending lamp. Another miss! Camel-leaders were by that time growing hysterical, fearful for the safety of the beasts and the loads, but that "enfant terrible" was in an obstinate frame of mind. Risking a slip that would have spelt disaster to himself and his brothers, he balanced himself at a precarious angle on three feet, and got in a third kick—a beautifully aimed one, considering the target was behind him, and out of his line of vision. It caught the lamp squarely, and sent it hurtling over the rock, to fetch up, unbroken, by some miracle, at the very feet of the outraged Umbashi. I would hesitate to swear to it, but I fancied that I heard that hump-backed sinner make a rumbling in his throat that suspiciously resembled a chuckle, as, contented, he followed down behind his brethren.

We made camp about half-a-mile from the springs, in the shelter of the straggling line of thorns. Before turning in that night, we had our first bath in one of the warm soda springs, and a glorious, refreshing bath it was. The grime of days washed off, we stretched out under the stars, cooled and clean, to watch the changing tableaux about the camp-fires, where Somali, Turkana and Rhodesian, equally wearied, equally thirsty, hungry and dirty, gulped down portions of gazelle flesh, and sipped sparingly of their all-too-inadequate fresh-water ration, and carried on disjointed conversations in low murmurs.

We spent two days in that spot, to rest the camels, and to give Hughes the chance of securing a rhino. Our camping site had little to commend it, though it was the best spot available on the whole of the shimmering surface of that desert. It was hot almost from the moment that day broke, and as the sun rose higher, and its rays were reflected back from the desert floor, and from the wall of lava behind us, the air became stifling, and none of us showed any inclination to move. We

sprawled out on our stretchers in our tents, clad in the barest minimum of clothing, trying to doze or helping each other to conjure up visions of arctic climes, where cold water gushed clearly from icebergs, and Eskimos brought foaming tankards of ice-cold ale for the refreshment of jaded travellers. The lightest breezes we counted as blessings, heaven sent, but they were few and far between, and for the greater part of those two grilling days we just perspired, and waited for the sunset, with its relief from the furnace-like conditions.

The Persian sheep and goats, which we had brought for food from Marsabit, for all their powers of endurance, were in a pitiful plight. They had slaked their thirst, but there was nothing in the way of fodder on which they could graze, and starved and wearied by their long trek, they huddled together around a dry, dead, thorn-bush—a forlorn-looking band, waiting for the relief from the intense heat, that only darkness could bring.

It was sunset on the first day before we stirred from our tent, and made our way to the water. Away across the desert to the north of Mount Kulal, the sun slipped from the almost cloudless sky in a blaze of golden glory, as we plodded across the shingle towards the shallow pools that shone like burnished silver in their slate-grey settings. Vultures rose in clouds from the rotting carcasses of animals that lay about the water's edge, and circled upwards in effortless flight. Bones of beasts, and two or three human skeletons, bleached and whitened by countless suns, and scattered by jackals and hyenas, littered the waste in every direction—a dreary, desolate scene. White dust rising in a cloud led us off on a tour of investigation, and we came up with a herd of Grevy's zebra, and noticed several other animal herds heading for the water, from across the desert distances.

Near the water there was an unpleasant, pungent odour of sulphur, mixed with other heavier stench, but much of the water looked inviting enough. Its sources were innumerable small springs, bubbling up through a film of black mud. The fluid, though a little

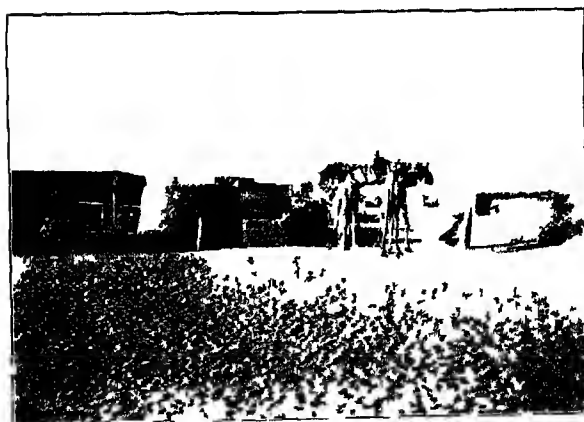
fresher at its sources, was, in the pools, rather too salty for humans to drink. For all that, some of the natives did drink freely of it during the time we were camped at the spot, and suffered no ill-effects. For bathing purposes the pools were ideal, being slightly warm, and impregnated with sulphur. We wallowed in them for hours at a stretch. Sleep was out of the question for long after we turned in at night, since during the early part of the evenings the heat in the tents was stifling, and when the breeze sprang up, it blew the tent flaps about with such violence, that drowsiness was banished utterly. The first night, after a day of dead calm, a gale came up about midnight and tore our tent down.

Omari came the following morning, and aroused us from a fitful sleep, with the information that Simba had been sighted around the south side of the lava wall, against which we were camped. We dressed hastily, grabbed our rifles and set off, guided by an askari and our friend the "plug-ugly". When we reached the spot indicated by the boys we found that Hughes, astir before us, had shot one of two lions that had approached to within about sixty yards of him, but had only wounded it in the shoulder. Both beasts had made off, the wounded one disappearing into a small clump of palms. Just as we arrived one of the boys saw it on top of the lava scarp. We scrambled up, and picked up the blood spoor within a few minutes. For the next four hours we trailed the beast over the blisteringly hot rocks, but only gained a fleeting glimpse of it. The spoor finally led us to the narrow opening of a cave, that ran back deep under the lava, and although we spent considerable time and energy trying to induce the wounded beast to come out, we had finally to abandon the hunt. Our encounters with Simba were invariably disappointing.

Duck shooting at the pools was apparently more in our line, and we enjoyed considerable success there for a couple of hours. Two rhino that we had sighted at the pools on the previous day, were prominent objects on



An Arab Home made of Fibre Mats Near the Qoz El Laya



Our Camels Passing through a Nile Village near El Gctema



The Gordon Memorial, Khartoum



Umbashi, among the Ancient Ruins of Meroe, A E Sudan

the horizon as we made our way over the salt-encrusted surface of the desert to a favourite bathing spot that evening, and we deferred our dip to enjoy a slight diversion with the two beasts. Hughes had refrained from shooting either of them because his licence permitted his shooting one only, and he did not consider their horns of sufficient weight to warrant his exhausting his permit. One of the rhino, whom we had christened Horace, left his companion after a while and made his way slowly towards us. I tried to get close enough to get a picture, but when I had advanced to within a hundred yards of him, he became restive, looked long and hard at me, and then headed for me at a trot. I retreated through one of the pools, and joined Hughes and Wilson. Horace came on, shook his head as if in doubt as to what course to pursue, turned back for a short distance, and then spun around and stared at us intently for a few minutes. Hughes discharged his shotgun over the brute's head, and Horace showed his displeasure by performing an ungainly dance, and he then pounded across the mud, endeavouring to get our wind. He got it, and stopped. Hughes discharged both barrels, and we bolted, for though a rhino's poor sight leaves him very uncertain as to the exact whereabouts of an enemy, even at a very short range, once he gets wind of his quarry, he is never astray. Horace charged all right, but at right angles to the direction we took, and was soon only a speck on the horizon, having charged blindly, at terrific speed, past the spot on which we had been standing.

The Native corporal reported, while we were at supper that night, that one of the camels was missing when the boys returned with their charges from the grazing grounds, about five miles across the desert. Hughes was breathing dire threats affecting the personal comfort of the camel-leaders responsible, as we turned in. Five strokes apiece were to be laid on with a kiboko if the animal was not recovered by morning. The boys were very subdued that night.

Death comes very swiftly, and very surely to the unprotected in the desert. There, prey for the nocturnal hunters of the animal kingdom is scarce, and hunger makes fierce beasts fiercer, more daring, and more relentless in pursuit than their better nourished cousins. By day the gleaming wastes of sand appear bare, monotonous and dreary, but so long as water be at hand there seems to be nothing terror-inspiring visible. Heat, glare and silence need strike no fear to the heart of man, nor to the more defenceless four-footed creatures that roam the wilderness. Yet those heaps of bleaching bones tell their own grisly tale. Simba, though rarely seen, reveals his presence by the heavy tracks he leaves on the sand; Fisi, the hyena, sends his blood-chilling howl echoing across the desert wastes nightly. Though the mangy brute, seen at dawn, slinking, belly to the sand, to his lair appears a cowardly, contemptible beast, he is an implacable tormenter by night, and by reason of his stealth, and extraordinary strength of jaw, is a deadly hunter, once he gets on the trail of a defenceless, or wounded quarry.

Before the camp settled to sleep that evening, the camel-leaders roamed the desert for miles in search of the missing camel, and when they failed to find it, they knew, as did we, that there was little likelihood of ever recovering it alive. Hyenas hooted throughout the night, and we took their wailing as the missing beast's death knell.

Before daylight, camels were packed, and the *safari* moved off at the first streaks of dawn, heading west across the sands toward Mt. Kulal. Jim and I struck across the shingle to take our final hot bath before moving on. We saw Horace in the distance, and glimpsed a late-homing hyena skulking away to the shadows at the foot of the lava scarp, but otherwise the desert appeared deserted. In that, the pleasantest hour of a desert day, the hot, dreary march ahead was hard to conjure up.

Having wallowed in the refreshing, salty, mud shallows for half-an-hour, we followed leisurely in the wake

of the camels. The sand was fairly firm under foot, making walking easy; the air was still and cool, and a clouded sky, not yet robbed of its rosy dawn-flush, appeared very friendly. It was good to be alive during the course of those first pleasant miles. Ahead we could see a motionless khaki-clad askari standing, leaning on his rifle, in an attitude of picturesque relaxation, gazing out over the sand dunes from the top of a low ridge. He was searching for the missing camel. Himself a child of the desert, he shared with his kind a full measure of their love for the burden-carriers of the wastes they call their home, and we understand that he, as a soldier, felt, in addition to the regret of the loss of a treasured servant, something of humiliation that one of his charges should have strayed. An askari has a strong sense of duty.

Suddenly a rifle shot rang out, followed, after an interval, by a shrill blast from a whistle. The watcher turned his gaze in the direction whence the sound had come, having apparently received a signal. He then made his way in the direction the camels had taken. His was vigil no longer necessary. Hughes and his orderly came across a ridge shortly afterwards, and we noticed that the native carried a camel's tail in his hand. Hughes told us all there was to tell. Attracted by a flock of hovering vultures, he had gone off into the sand-hills, and had come on the remains of the camel. The beast had been pulled down by hyenas, two of which were still tearing away at the carcase when he arrived on the scene. The shot we heard was fired at one of the brutes, which carried off a shattered leg to remind it that Fisi should not be seen abroad after daylight.

At mid-day we halted in a small patch of thorns, and askari "kanga", or messenger, left us, and struck north across the desert, to carry instructions to the Rendille tribesmen on Lake Rudolph, to have the eighteen camels required to complete the batch for Lokitaung, sent south to meet us at Serima, near the south end of Rudolph. We made Gurgumwa, or Kurkum Well that

night, one of the two watering places between Koroli and the Lake.

The following day we entered light thorn scrub country again, and then more lava boulders, across which we trekked, still taking our bearings from Mt. Kulal. Camped in the broad, dry bed of a lugga that night, we beguiled away the time before bed listening to our murderous-looking "plug-ugly", reciting with much gusto, and a great deal of gesture, how he had killed half-a-dozen sleeping enemies in one night, and committed horrible desecration on their bodies. A self-confessed rogue, thief, and murderer, a great boaster, and yet a simple soul withal, was that happy-go-lucky villain. We had no doubt he would cut our throats for a small monetary consideration, but as it was unlikely that there would be any such bribe held out, we felt quite safe.

Further miles through the "Wait-a-bit" thorn brought Kulal's rugged outline and wild ravines within clearer view. Kulal, situated about twenty-five miles from the south-eastern edge of Lake Rudolph, rises to a height of 7,500 feet, and runs for about twenty-five miles north and south. Its mighty ravines and precipitous ridges are deeply forested, but it receives only a meagre rainfall, and no permanent streams, and very few intermittent rivers, flow from it, to water the thirsty, barren land that stretches away from its base. A few Lokkobb nomads roam its slopes, but otherwise the country around the mountain is quite uninhabited, and even the Lokkobb of that region are seldom seen, for they are shy, reserved people who are reputed to hide themselves in Kulal's ravines on the approach of strangers. Fear has played a part in the formation of their retiring habits, for it is by no means an unheard of event for the raiding Havaish of Abyssinia to come down from their mountains, to rob and slay any caravans, or natives they may happen upon.

Our slow progress through the terrible thorns that tore our flesh and ripped our clothing was further

retarded by fractious camels that occasionally snapped their ropes, and tried to make off through the scrub, only to be brought to heel by a crowd of yelling syces, askari and camel-leaders, working in unison, and cursing in chorus. The loose stones, too, made fast travelling impossible, for there were no tracks through them, and progress had to be made by stepping from stone to stone. Boulder-filled luggas, miles of thorn-bush, patches of Fitzdecertze (a long, tubular leaved shrub, the milky sap of which is a deadly poison), and endless stretches of lava rock, were all the scenery there was in that parched brown wilderness.

A deep gorge in Mt. Kulal, which was reputed to contain water, was our penultimate goal before Lake Rudolph. We did not enter the gorge, but camped a few miles away from it, and sent off the camels with the barramills, in charge of five boys to replenish our water supply. It was terribly rugged country, broken by many ravines, and though the boys had but a few miles to go, and started about noon, they had not returned when we turned in at midnight. Huge fires were lighted to guide them back, in case they were lost, but we could do nothing further in that terrible country in the darkness, and we retired eventually, hoping they had not struck trouble with raiders, at the water. They came in next morning, having missed their way, and wandered for hours in the darkness before finding the camp, but they denied the truth on principle. A native hates to get lost, and will never admit the fact that he is, or has been.

Turning south to pass around Kulal, we found the country became worse and worse as we advanced. Thorns barred our path at every step—vile, tangled brambles, that hooked into our clothes and flesh at a dozen points, however carefully we tried to thread our way through them. Never for half-a-dozen yards were we clear of them, and to make matters worse, the country became more and more broken, so that the camels had the greatest difficulty in proceeding. So

steep were some of the boulder-strewn gorges that we had sometimes to skirt their edges for miles, in order to find a place down which the camels could pass. The heat was very trying for the parched beasts, as they had at that stage been without water for four days, and feed had not been plentiful. They began to show signs of exhaustion, and their pace slowed to a crawl. Some days, at the end of a six hours' march, we found we had covered but ten miles. One beast dropped in its tracks, and try as we would, we could not get it to rise. Nothing could be done for it, so it was shot. Vultures, appearing seemingly from nowhere, swooped down on the carcase before we had advanced twenty yards.

Hughes, taking with him a section of the camels and some askari, parted from us at the south end of the mountain, in order to make a slight detour, with the hopes of falling in with some greater kudu, that the natives reported to be plentiful on the mountain slopes. We were to rejoin at Serima. Jim and I trekked on with the remainder of the *safari* over deep gullies and stony luggas, past bare hills, and down rocky slopes, never for a moment out of the tearing, scratching thorn scrub. Leaving the base of Kulal we could see ahead of us the rugged masses of Nyiro (9,000 feet) and Indunumara, or Morrokorri Mountain (5,500 feet), and we set our course slightly north of those mighty neighbours.

With at least two days to go without a hope of replenishing our water supply, water conservation had to be practised rigidly, and Jim and I were reduced to shaving and bathing with the contents of a single mug of water apiece. Umbashi complained of his griminess when he was about to begin the task of bread-making, but we debated long whether or no we could afford him the water in which to wash his hands. Hygiene was upheld finally, but it was touch and go.

The first night after parting from Hughes, a series of torch flashes from the darkness around the lower slopes of Kulal indicated that he was trying to get in touch with us. Jim, being an expert in the mysteries

of Morse, was able to exchange messages with him. We learned that he had been blocked by an impassable gorge, and would have to cast round for a fresh route to the summit on the morrow.

Lance-Corporal Ali Shabar, who is in charge of our askaris, rouses the camp at 4 a.m. the next morning, and we move off, turning slightly to the south-west, and heading towards the rugged volcanic country at the south end of the Lake. Wild scenery takes the place of the wearying sea of brown through which we have been forcing our slow way for days. The morning for a change is cool, for the sky is overcast, and a fresh breeze rustles through the thorns. Rain clouds, strangers to us for months, are banking over Rudolph, fifteen miles off, and still hidden behind a long, low ridge, that slopes down from Kulal. Kulal, dwarfing as we move away from it, crouches low on its dark base, half hidden by a gloomy pall of grey-black cloud. Fancy sees it as some sullen, half-fearful giant, squatting, cowed, before the menace of the two monsters, that face it across the plain—Indunumara and Nyiro.

We stumbled over the boulders, descended a shallow rocky gorge, and wind up over the ridge, the camel-leaders urging their beasts up the difficult ascent with coaxing cries—"Ho! Ho! Ho!". Gently does it, and the last of the string is up, and threading along the camel track we have stumbled upon, towards a line of palms that marks a lugga's course.

As we were passing a hill, a little further on, the Turkana leading the foremost camel, called our attention to a pair of rhino moving slowly up the hill through the scrub. Accompanied by Ali, Hughes' servant, Jim and I went off after them, in the hopes of getting a photograph, giving Ali Shabar instructions to push on with the *safari*. We succeeded in getting close to the beasts, but not close enough to get a picture before they scented us, and moved off in opposite directions. We followed the bull hoping that he might stop. He took a winding track through the thorn bush, and we went

very warily, as we suspected that we might at any moment come on him around a bend in the track he was making. For all our care, we were not exactly prepared for that eventuality, when it did arrive. We almost ran into him, he having turned from the track, and hidden behind a thorn shrub, waiting for us with lowered head. Jim, who was a pace or two in front, pulled up short a few yards from him, and shouted a warning. We dodged back as one man, as the brute snorted angrily, and charged. Through the corner of my eye I saw Jim make off in one direction, but Ali slipped from human ken in a flash. Where he went to, we never discovered, but nothing was seen of him for the next half-hour. I skipped behind a bush out of the line of charge. Knowing that if it had singled out one of us, and was making a direct charge, that one would have no chance of dodging the brute because of the shortness of the lead, I opened fire, and got in about three shots, which effectually stopped him. I then lost sight of the rhino in a cloud of dust that he sent up. Jim came up with me and we surveyed the dust cloud for some time, not attempting to penetrate it, for we did not know if the rhino had cleared, or was still hidden there. After a while we scouted around, and finally saw the beast making off, at a great speed over a distant ridge. It had too great a start on us, and although we followed for an hour, we did not come up with it. During the course of the chase, the valiant Ali rose up out of the scrub, grinning cheerfully, but tendering no explanation as to how he had made his get-away so quickly.

We reached Serima next day after passing through an oval valley in which green fodder plants grew, and which abounded with game. Approaching the village we met the first individual, outside our own party, whom we had seen since leaving Marsabit—a withered, half-clad old Rendille, who advanced hand-outstretched in greeting, and who seemed vastly relieved when we shook it in turn, and passed on, leaving him intact. By his demeanour, we judged that he was not familiar with

the sight of white men. Another mile on, we sighted large sheep and goat herds shepherded by young Rendille braves, and a few females. As soon as the women sighted our *safari* they fled like startled antelopes across the rough, lava stone, their flimsy coverings of hide flapping in the breeze, and revealing their not unbeautiful forms beneath—to the amusement of their menfolk.

Our guide told us when we had reached Serima, but there seemed nothing to substantiate his statement. It was not until he pointed out to us a rocky gorge, in which there lay several pools of glorious fresh water, that we believed him. Serima consists of half-a-dozen pools of water, and sometimes a native village, but as the Rendille are nomads, the village is not always in the vicinity.

We pitched our camp at the foot of a mighty hill of iron-stone, in a small clump of spreading thorn trees. While we lunched the camels were taken down the gorge and given their first drink in seven days! The three surviving sheep also drank their fill, after an almost equally long period of thirstiness. Only desert-bred animals could live in Kenya's northern wastes, for they must surely be among the most arid and desolate on earth. Our camping place, close by good water, and shaded by green trees, was the most inviting of our many halting places in the country north of the Guaso Nyiro, yet beyond a circle of a few yards radius, there was nothing but lava rock. Hills of crumbling iron-stone completely shut in the scorched black, plain, through which meandered the gorge in which our water lay.

Rendille came across the sea of boulders from their little village on the fringe of the amphitheatre, in the afternoon, to pay their respects, and offer camels' milk for sale. They spoke no other dialect than their own, and it was difficult to converse with them, but amicable relations were rapidly established, and they stayed long chatting with the Somali and Turkanas of our party, the advent of our caravan being apparently regarded

as an event of some moment in their dull lives. We asked them for details of the surrounding country, with the object of learning if it were practicable to follow the lake shore around to the west side, as far as the Turkwell River mouth, from which point we wished to strike west to Lodwar, but we gleaned little, owing to the difficulty of making ourselves understood. They spoke with some show of animation of a mountain that hissed and puffed, and pointed out its direction. We gathered that they referred to Telekis volcano, shown on our chart as being at the south-east corner of the Lake. We decided to climb the great hill before our camp, to view our surroundings, and find out, if possible, the course of our next march. The climb was an arduous one, for the steep sides of the hill were covered with loose sandstone boulders that rolled from under our feet, and caused us several slips backwards. Our reward came when the summit was reached, and we had our first view of Lake Rudolph in its wild setting.

Between us and the shore, five miles distant, rose pile on pile of blackened rock, towering hills of lava, jumbled in wild confusion across the narrowed field of our vision. Sombre Pullo, rising up from the rocks immediately below us, shut us in on the north, the gloomy crags of Nyiro's lower slopes blocked the view to the south, and Kulal and Indunumara completed the rugged semi-circle behind us. Shut in by those mighty masses of dead volcanic rock, we looked forward, seeking relief from the awful desolation on either hand—and found it in the heart of a region even more wild, more desolate, and more forbidding. Where the seared hills before us fell away, broad sweeps of a deep purple sea were revealed, walled in by mountains, and mirroring darkly the dense cloud banks hanging low above it. Across to its farther shore we could see, where a frowning, thousand-feet wall of black rock rose up out of the lake depths, it seemed, marking the limit of its Turkana edge. Our view took in but a section of the lake's extensive surface—a stretch about twelve miles square,

reaching from the southernmost peak of wild El Molo—Rudolph's mountainous South Island—to Telekis volcano, at the extreme southern end of the lake, but a more ruggedly picturesque, a more wildly beautiful view, would have been impossible to obtain, for the desolation of the lava desert, spread out below our vantage point. The awe-inspiring grandeur of the mighty peaks, the ruggedness of the gorges carrying the sometimes flowing waters of the intermittent streams to the Lake, and the sombre beauty of the fiord-like lake itself, combined all the elements of utter desolation with sombre beauty of waters dark as night. The whole was a vision of wild loveliness, that any softer outlines could only mar.

With the deepening of the shadows, as the sun slipped down behind the clouds above the wild Turkana shore, and the purple of the lake's surface changed to ebon blackness, the desert isolation of the scene seemed intensified a hundred-fold. A cool night breeze swept down from the mountains behind us; the crimson bands faded. We made our way back to camp, where fires were beginning to flare up, and left the lake to its slumbers.

Hughes rejoined us next day, he having bagged a fine greater kudu trophy a trifle sooner than he had anticipated. We decided to move from Serima down to the lake shore, six miles' trek across the lava, there to await the camels, which the askari "kanga" had gone off to summon from higher up the lake.

The six miles to the lake was made by stepping from boulder to boulder, and the camels took three hours over the task. Had we not had previous illustration of what Rendille and Turkana camels could do over that almost impassable country, we would have doubted their ability to cover that particular stretch. As it was their performance was a revelation. They seemed to sense, rather than see, just where the boulders would furnish a safe foothold, and they rarely stumbled, though every square yard of the ground we passed over

was hidden under an overlay of boulders that varied in diameter from a few inches, to three and four feet. Sometimes deep ravines would halt them for a space, and they would stop, bawling loudly, afraid to continue. A little coaxing, a few threats, and tugs at the cruel halter tied tightly to their lower-jaws, and they would take the plunge, and go, half-sliding, to the bottom, fetching up with a jerk that threatened to shake the loads from their backs. Once they had to descend an almost perpendicular scarp thirty feet high, slipping from rocky ledge to boulder pile. They reached the base without mishap, a really remarkable performance.

On a semi-circular plain, backed by the red-brown crumbling walls of a precipitous scarp, about a quarter of a mile back from the lake, we pitched our tents, after the whole personnel of the party had spent an hour clearing away the boulders.

A close view of the lake was like a glimpse of the sea to us, who had not set eyes on that welcome sight for over a year. Its broad expanse of deep waters—sea-green in colour when viewed from close at hand—was rippling under a strong land breeze, and white-caps flecked its surface, where tiny wavelets curled and broke.

Our boots had been badly torn in the course of our journey across the stones, and the soles of mine had parted from the uppers. We took advantage of the delay at the lake to fashion a pair of moccasins out of an impala skin, and laced them over our boots. Even the natives smiled as we sallied forth with our feet encased in the awkward-looking improvisations.

So violent was the wind at night during the five days we spent at the lake, that we had to erect a barricade of boxes and other articles from our baggage around our tents to prevent them from being blown away. Sometimes the gale raged all day, causing us all manner of unexpected misfortunes. Anyone who has tried to sprinkle sugar on porridge out in the open, while a boisterous wind is whipping up the milk from the surface of the same breakfast dish, and spraying it over

one's chest, can understand the peculiar difficulties of the task.

Small bands of Turkana nomads, naked, picturesque savages, their heads weighted down with huge daubs of mud and hair, kneaded into a composite mass, wandered into our camp at intervals, and we engaged one of them to guide us around the lake.

We spent the days idling around for the camels from the north of the lake to come in, employing some of the time very profitably in shooting and fishing. Hughes was particularly successful with the fishing line, and he landed several fine specimens, including a twenty-pound fish of the cat-fish variety, and a large, rather curious type of turtle, in addition to large quantities of somewhat smaller fish, nearly all of which were edible. Sometimes we risked the crocodiles, and indulged in swimming in the salty waters of the lake. Altogether those five days were as pleasant an interlude as we had spent in many long months.

As no tidings of the camels we were awaiting had come in by the evening of the fifth day, Wilson and I decided that we could not wait longer, and Hughes suggested that we push on, taking with us eight of the camels, a syce, a camel-leader and a Turkana guide. We were to take them as far as Lodwar, and there hand them over. Hughes decided to wait another four days on the lake, before following us.

Rudolph looked its best when Jim and I went down to take our final bathe on our last evening of our stay in that camp. Opalescent mists deepening with the passing of the minutes, veiled mountainous shore and amethyst sea. Mysterious El Molo, bleak and wild, loomed blackly against the flushing western sky. Dark shadows filled ravine and gorge, warm breezes swept the rocky beach, and flecked with white the dark lines of miniature, shoreward hastening rollers. As we watched, Turkana's gloomy range faded into the distant western darkness.

CHAPTER XVII

AMONG THE TURKANA

ALONG RUDOLPH'S SHORE—TELEKIS VOLCANO—A TERRIBLE CLIMB
—RAIN IN THE DESERT—FIRST AID—A BARBARIAN PRINCE CHARMING
—LOKKOBB FISHERMEN—THE KERIO AND THE TURKWEIL CROSSED—
A DESERT OUTPOST—THE BARRIER OF THE SWAMPS—HOME THOUGHTS
FROM THE WASTELAND

EIGHT bawling camels were loaded as daylight was flooding lake and shore, and it was still early when our syce announced that all was ready.

Taking leave of our good friend Hughes, we set off around the shore of the lake, heading for Lodwar.

The way was very rocky, and stepping from stone to stone proved a fatiguing business when kept up hour after hour. The camels went admirably, never faltering over the roughest places. Down scarps and over ridges we went, winding in and out among the enormous boulders in search of the best route through the rugged country. The lake shore became wilder as we advanced, and, to make matters worse, a blistering sun poured down its rays on the boulders with such intensity that they were uncomfortably hot to the touch long before noon. Not a breeze fanned the furnace, that the baked walls of rusty brown rock about us formed, and there was not the slightest shade to offer man or beast even a momentary escape from the heat. The view of the lake, with its surrounding wild hills and rugged gorges, overshadowed by mightier mountain masses in the near distance, we were still able to admire, and the enticing beauty of the then deep-blue, still waters, running back into coolshaded fiords, the wide sweeping bays the misty headlands, and mountainous isles of the lake,

lost nothing in our eyes because they appeared a vision of freshness and coolness, tantalisingly near to our rugged, tortuous path.

At the end of that day's trek we came to the Telekis volcano and made camp amongst the rocks, not far from its base. The volcano, which is still active, is set at the end of a long peninsula, which extends far out into the lake. Its steep, sloping sides were covered with shifting volcanic dust, and Jim, who made an attempt to climb to the top, found that climbing was so difficult and slow a business that darkness overtook him before he had completed his task, and he had to return to camp without having gained a peep over the rim.

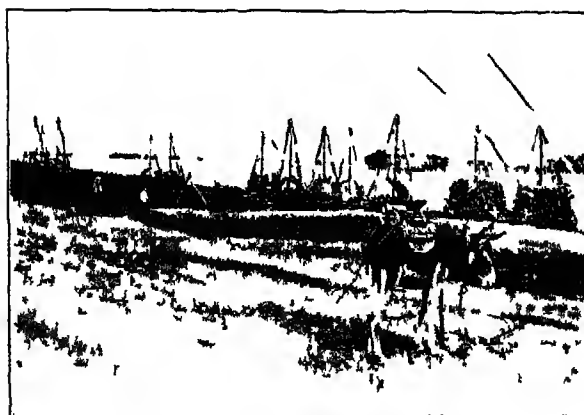
An ill-assorted pair of savages wandered into our encampment that night. One was an evil-looking, scarred old Turkana, absolutely nude, and his companion was a shapely, graceful young "bibi", her charms more revealed than concealed beneath the spare leathern robe that hung from her shoulders. The male was as surly and uncompromising in appearance, as she was shy. He had a small stick skewered through his heavy underlip, rendering his evil face even more repellent. The pair had come from a "manyatta", close by the crater, having been summoned by our guide, who did not desire to go any further. The nude one had volunteered to take his place, and lead our *safari* for one day, at the end of which another Turkana was to take over. So the business of guiding us from day to day was to be handed on from one native to another, until we had negotiated the rugged country in the vicinity of the lake. Our camp that night was on the border of the territory from which those naked savages came, the line of demarcation between the Northern Frontier Province and Turkana, striking the lake about that point.

From the outset of our trek the following morning, we were confronted with almost insuperable obstacles to our progress. The first barrier which we had to surmount was a rugged wall rising almost sheer above us for about sixty feet, and though we kept along it until

a more broken section gave the burdened camels some sort of foothold, the barrier still presented such a formidable obstacle, that even the willing Rendille camels baulked at it. One by one we gradually urged them up from boulder to boulder, though it took several hours to get them all up. If the ascent had been difficult, the descent, at first sight, seemed impossible of achievement. From the top of the boulders a scene of utter waste and desolation was set out before us—it was as if we were looking into a bubbling pit of hell after the infernal fires had died down. What had once been a deep gully, walled in by grim volcanic peaks had been filled up when, at some not far distant period, the molten heart of the earth had been belched up from a score of craters, vents and fissures, and had surged down the valley, cracking and charring the mighty rock walls which confined it, and covering the valley floor to a great depth. In cooling, the lava stream had contracted in such a fashion that the upper crust of the vast sea of burnt, blackened clinkers was twisted and folded into a thousand grotesque shapes. In places, where the swirling black flood had set in piled-up coils, it appeared as if the charred entrails of some colossal beast had been flung down. For as far as the eye could see the awful desolation was spread. Fissures split the stream into vast uneven blocks, the surface was everywhere broken and uneven. For a human being the task of traversing it would be a labour of intense effort, and we had the camels to consider. The only route open to us appeared to be to descend to the edge of the field, pass over the jumble of boulders edging it, and seek a crossing at a passable spot. It was for our guide to find us such a passage, but first the camels had to be got down to the edge of the lava from their perch on the ridge. They were fearful of the task, and would not make the attempt until they were almost pushed over the brink of the rocky precipice. Foot by foot, from boulder to boulder, the natives urged them down. At every step, or rather jump, it seemed as if their legs would be broken for a



Sphinx like Figures Guarding a Temple, 2,000 years old
Meroe



Native Shipping on the Atbara River



Zaaf (the Leaf Fibre of the *Tom* Palm, used for Rope-Making) awaiting Shipment: on the Atbara.



Our Camels' Daily Feed in the Nubian Desert.

certainty. There was never a foothold for four feet at any one spot, and the poor brutes would stand with three pads planted in extremely awkward positions, their legs spreadeagled at all angles, pawing the rocks for a spot on which to place the fourth. Finally a jump, or a stumble, would take them a little lower, a battle of wills between the syces and the camels would follow, a few more steps and jumps, and finally the whole *safari* was safely down. Over the loose boulders around the lava's edge, we trekked for some distance, and then the guide found a fissure through the lava stream, and the caravan crunched for a mile or so over the yielding cinders. The fissure ended after a while in a blank wall, and more climbing had to be done in order to reach the upper surface of the lava. Slowly the camels made their way across the terrible black waste, passing round the base of a large volcanic cone. From then on, our way lay over deep piles of loose cinders, which made somewhat better going. Most of the lava and the cinders had apparently been belched from that cone, and Jim and I were not at all certain whether the cone we had seen at the end of the promontory jutting into the lake, or this other volcanic pile, was Telekis volcano—the charts we possessed appeared to express divided opinions on the subject. The Turkana call the second cone Likayo, but when we asked them if it was Telekis they signified that it was. Jim and I decided to scale to its summit and take a look round.

The climb up the steep ash-covered slopes under a scorching sun was as arduous as anything we had attempted. At every upward step we sank knee-deep in cinders, and soon the moccasins holding our soles to our boots were torn away, and the soles were left flapping. Nearing the summit we could see that the volcano, a towering mass, had been split almost in halves in its upper section, by some mighty upheaval. It had several craters, and the steep slopes were covered to the very rims with the overlay of cinders. The first crater, which we gained out of breath, and bathed in perspira-

tion, fell away to a great depth, sheer below the rim on which we stood. It was almost filled in with ash, however, and not impressive as a spectacle. Making our way around the rim, at some risk of being carried down into it with the avalanche of ashes we set in motion, we reached the second, and higher crater. It smacked more of fire and brimstone than the other, and overpowering sulphur fumes issued from a vent which went down into the earth from the bottom of the crater saucer. Sulphur, and some white deliquescent substance, not unlike caustic soda in appearance, though more plastic when moulded between the fingers, covered the slopes above the crater, and seeking to discover the source from which the substances issued, we clambered up the loose sliding cinders, charred rock, and loose lumps of sulphur, until we reached the edge of a third crater. We were then nearly across to the opposite side of the volcano, but the third crater blocked our path to the opposite wall. Wishing to see what lay beyond we slid down into the crater for some distance, and risking a dash across the steeply shelving slope, passed around to the other side, considerable avalanches of loose rubble threatening to carry us down to the fissure at the bottom of the crater, as we went. We got across finally, and climbing the crumbling wall out of the crater—a ticklish job, as the wall was little more than caked ash, and quite perpendicular, and a fall at that particular stage would have sent us rolling, with no possibility of fetching up, down into the bowels of the earth. Climbing very cautiously, we reached the upper edge, and as we expected, further sources of the enormous lava field were visible. The whole country round about appeared to be one huge volcanic field, and side-streams of cold lava could be seen, their sources in vents in the earth, or from the summits of volcanic hills, being clearly visible.

We stayed a while to enjoy the magnificent panorama of the lake, and then, as we could see that the camels had travelled round to the side of the volcano which we

had gained, we did not trouble to retrace our tracks, but made straight down to them. It was easier to run down that slope than walk, but once we began to run we had to continue, as we were unable to pull up owing to the steepness of the shifting, ash-covered slope. We covered the distance to the base as if we possessed seven-league boots, and reached the bottom thoroughly tired out, and with perspiration oozing from every pore.

A trying walk through the hottest part of a scorching day followed. The ash and lava were almost unbearably hot, and when a draught of air arose, it struck in our faces like the breath of a furnace blast. Through the volcanic hills we climbed, passed through a nek, and entered a broad, boulder-strewn plain, sweeping down to the lake shore below us. In a belt of palms fringing a dry lugga running into the south-west corner of the lake, we made our camp. It had taken us the best part of a day to cover nine miles, but we had passed through a stretch of what is perhaps the most rugged country on earth. That day's march brought us to the end of our passage along the southern shore of the lake, and we were up against the mountain walling in the western shore. On the morrow we had somehow or other to take our camels up over that wall, and strike away to the north-west. We would leave the lake behind for some days, and strike it again at the mouth of the Kerio River.

We took our last bathe in the lake that night, and returned to camp to think over the problem confronting us.

Although it wanted still an hour to sunrise, there was not the usual chilliness in the morning air when the camels, protesting against the lashing-on of their herriers, or pack-saddles, roused us to wakefulness.

A bright moon poured down a golden flood on the feathery tops of the palms, lighting wanly the grey sands of the lugga bed. Camel-men and syce bustled actively around the complaining beasts, as they squatted in the shadows, pulling at their girth-bands, roping on

saddle-poles over camel-hide saddle-leathers, and chanting incessantly the monotonous phrases that have little meaning, but appear to assist their labours in some manner.

Our minds are weighted with the problem of scaling that mountainous wall, and we are eager to get an early start. By the time the saddles are secured we have finished our morning drink of cocoa, and packed our camp gear ready for loading. In spite of the labours that lie before us, we are able to appreciate the magic of the hour. Dawn is not far off, the stars are paling, and the moon is riding down towards the western hills. Gradually the circle of light cast by the camp fires contracts, as the grey half-light preceding the sunrise filters over the eastern hills and creeps across the plain on which we are camped.

Looking across in the direction from which we have come, we see a low dark ridge sweeping around to the south, and linking up with the mountains of the lake's western shore, so that the plain on which we are encamped is enclosed in a wide semi-circle of mountain and hill. Behind the ridge the volcanic craters show their tips—gaunt skeletons of dead hills. Nyiro's distant crest is dimly discernible in the half gloom. Before us the darkness is lifting from the lake, and slowly the wild outlines of El Molo, and smaller islands across the water, rise out of the gloom. The morning breeze ruffles the broad surface of the lake, and sends line after line of foam-capped rollers scurrying towards the shingle. The low murmurous crooning music they make as they curl and break over the sandy bar, some yards out from the beach, is all the sound that breaks the dawn silence.

The moon sinks lower, but its brightness is as yet undimmed by the glories flashing now across the eastern sky. The stars have gone, all save three twinkling sisters shining through the infinity of space.

A mile's trekking brought us to the foot of the wall. Our guide, another naked Turkana, picked up at our

last camp, led us along the course of a gorge cutting into the rock wall. The path was steep, extraordinarily rocky, and kept perilously close to the brink of the gorge—so close in fact that loose boulders, set in motion by the camels, as they stumbled over them, went bounding down to its foot, about fifty feet below. After climbing about a hundred feet, the goat track we were following swung away from the gorge, and went up over the summit of a hill so steep, that it appeared impossible that any camel ever bred could climb it. Our beasts all had heavy loads, and to add to their difficulties, huge blocks of uneven stone blocked the path they were making, at every step. Very early in the climb the camels' overtaxed powers of endurance showed signs of giving way. One string of three beasts had almost gained the summit of the initial obstacle, when a commotion among the camels lower down told us that something was amiss. We went back, and found, as we had half feared, that one of the camels had fallen exhausted, and was unable to rise. It boded ill for our chances of making the summit, as our task had only begun, and we had an eighteen-hundred feet climb still before us. Jim and I assisted in removing the stricken beast's burden, and had it divided amongst the other seven camels. After a great deal of persuasion the exhausted animal struggled up, and followed steadily in the wake of the others.

"*Matato leo!*" Umbashi mumbled about five minutes later, when a second camel sank down, and threatened to give up the struggle. He was right. There *was* trouble that day. The path became almost unscaleable, and one by one the camels refused to stick at their terrible task. Most of them were breathing like broken bellows, in acute distress, and all were shaking under the terrific strain. The most badly affected of them we unhitched from their string, and urged up step by step. At every ledge or jutting boulder they abandoned their attempts to proceed, after a short struggle, and had to be almost dragged over the obstacles. Every foot of that ascent was a heavy struggle for man and beast, and the

fight was carried on under a blazing sun that heated the rocks to the temperature of furnace bricks.

Slowly and painfully we toiled up, progressing at a few hundred feet an hour, until only one slope remained to be conquered—but it was the longest, steepest, and most rugged of all. It looked as if we were to be beaten, for all our efforts. By that time each of us had one or two beasts under our separate charge, but on reaching a narrow ledge a short way up that last cliff, an impasse was reached, and a disaster was narrowly averted. The camel leader was urging a string of three over a particularly dangerous section when the last beast of the string slipped, and rolled with his load over the edge of a ravine. Fortunately a boulder checked his downward plunge, and when the load was cut from its saddle-trees, the beast managed to scramble back to the path. Jim's particular charge was the beast who had first fallen under its load; mine was a capable, but stubborn brute, that contested every step of the way with me. The other three—Umbashi, the syce, and the guide—had their hands full with their own beasts, so none could take over any of the camel-leader's trio. Jim, who was in front, continued his route, but the three concerned in the mishap could not be moved, and stood blocking the way for those behind. Eventually Jim ran his camel off on a side track, and returning, urged onward one of those holding up the *safari*, the camel-man dealing with the second. The remainder of us managed to squeeze past the third, and the painful task continued. Straining, stumbling, falling to their knees, or stopping altogether for five and ten minutes on end, the poor beasts made slow work of it, and tried the endurance of the whole party. The camel with the barramills, next in front of me, found a three-foot ledge too much to struggle over, with his three hundred pound load. In attempting to clamber up, he fell, and could not rise, and a second load had to be left on the mountain-side.

So the day wore on. At the end of four hours' intensive toil two camels were safely at the summit. I followed

with a third, and then returned with Jim and the syce to carry up the abandoned barramills—each weighing 150 pounds—a laborious task up that vile path. Back down the slope again to take other camels in hand, and thus we finally got the eight, and their loads, to the top, after the most strenuous day's work we had ever undertaken. All being assembled in the narrow cleft, from which a magnificent panorama of the lake, its islands, and headlands, 2,000 feet below us, could be obtained, we loaded up the unburdened camels, and pushed on to camp under a lone thorn-bush, having covered four and a half miles since dawn. After a spell we continued on for another couple of hours, over a boulder-strewn plateau, and came to a glorious pool of deep fresh water in a ravine—Korinya Pool, as the Turkana call it.

It was 3 o'clock next morning when I became conscious of the fact that steady rain was pattering down on my ground sheet. My hair was soaked, and the blanket, where it protruded from beneath the waterproof, was saturated. The flat plain on which we were camped looked very wet and muddy when the moon showed out from behind clouds which had gathered overnight, so it must have been raining for some time. My feet were in a pool of water, as the covering of my stretcher was waterproof and made a fine catchment.

Jim was snoring blissfully, unaware of the discomfort of his fellow wayfarer. His stretcher had collapsed a few days previously, and he was using a sleeping-bag improvised from our tent, his stretcher covering, and his waterproof. He looked very peaceful, and very dry, and I withstood the temptation to wake him and tell him it was raining. Pulling my blanket over my head—and off my feet—I tried to sleep, but the shower became a downpour, and the pool at my feet crept up under my back. I bailed my boat-like bed of most of its moisture, but it refilled very quickly, and in a short time my pyjamas were clinging clammily to my body. By that time my blankets squelched water whenever I moved,

and my clothes, used as a pillow, were like sodden sponges. A cold wind whistled across the waste, and my discomfiture was complete. When my sagging stretcher-covering brimmed to overflowing, I realised there was no more sleep for me that morning, and sat up, shivering. I thought we ought to move, and called to the syce to start loading. Forlorn hope! A leather saddle-cloth lying out in the middle of a morass of mud, suddenly became animated, and a red fez emerged from beneath it. Our syce kept his head out of the shelter just long enough to assure me that it was impossible to move the camels, as the ground was too slippery for them to walk on. Wrapping my ground sheet around me, I propped my back against a packing case, and waited for the hopeless dawn. When I judged it to be close at hand I thought longingly of a fire, and a cup of tea, and called to Umbashi to get busy. That unhappy individual arose from the mud, crept like a half-drowned rat to the spot where his fire had been overnight, and announced plaintively that the nkuni (firewood) was too wet to burn. He added the redundant remark that it was "hapana mazuri hapa" ("it is no good here"). I thoroughly agreed with him. Daylight came at long last. Umbashi and the syce between them managed to get a fire going, the breeze died down, and the world took on a more cheerful aspect. Our clothes dried out, breakfast inside us, and the promise of a warm day before us, we felt that things could have been worse. For all that, I considered that Jim's cheeriness was totally unwarranted.

Our guide, who had spent the night in the haunts of Venus, represented by a rude hut in a Turkana manyatta, across the plain, arrived back in camp in company with a bead-bespangled "bibbi", and requested one of us to go with him to the village, to attend to a toto (a little one) who had fallen in a fire. Taking our first-aid kit I went across. Nearing the huts, I saw a naked figure dash into the bushes, and sink down out of sight. At first I feared an ambush, but the amusement of my

companions reassured me. They called loudly to the hidden one to approach, and after some delay, he did so. He advanced very warily and seemed uncertain of me. When my peaceful intentions were made known he grinned sheepishly, and soon joined in the laughter against himself. He was a Mazai, or elder, of the tribe, and perhaps past experiences had taught him caution.

In a low, bare, dome-shaped hut my little patient was sleeping on a mat of camel-hide, his little clenched fists about two inches away from an unprotected fire. The poor mite had been terribly burned about the body, and I could do little but smear the enormous wound with ointment, and cover it with bandages, while an interested crowd squeezed inside and around the entrance watching the operation in silence. When it was finished, and I had handed the mother further dressings to be used later, the headman—a stately-looking old warrior, wearing gaudy plumes in his matted head-dress of white clay and hair, but otherwise as naked as on the day of his birth, asked me if I would like a “kibuyu” (leather flagon) of camels’ or goats’ milk. I declined for myself, but accepted for our guide, an opportunist who did not believe in allowing such occasions to pass without profiting by them.

Leaving the plain we passed from Mogurr, the Turkana encampment, to a stony plateau, and after going a few miles, saw below us a wide plain over which the Kerio and Turkwell Rivers flow to join the lake. The descent to the plain was the last precipitous work our over-taxed camels were called on to do, the remainder of the journey to Lodwar being over comparatively level country.

Ten miles across the plain we came to a spot where a party of Turkana were tending their flocks. A handsome, proud-looking youth, wearing head-dress and necklets not unlike the adornments worn by the ancients of Egypt, rose from where he had been reclining in the shade of a tree, wrapped a toga over his well-proportioned form, and came to greet us. He

was the son of the Sultani of the Turkana of that district, and his whole bearing was truly regal. We expressed a desire to purchase one of the sheep the women-folk were minding. The gist of his reply was, that he would not sell like a common trader, but in the absence of his father, would accompany us as far as the Kerio, and camp with our *safari*, leaving instructions that a sheep was to be brought to us. Payment he would not accept, though we might pay the equivalent value to the tribal account with the District Commissioner at Lodwa. A princely barbarian!

He acted as he had said, guiding us to the river a few miles on. The spot he led us to was ideal. Huge trees and great clusters of mokoma palms shaded a wide stretch of grassland on the banks of the Kerio, a wide, red stream that flowed rapidly along between its low banks, in full flood, not fifteen paces from our camp.

Lunch over, our Prince Charming, then arrayed in nothing but his beads, made himself a great favourite with the boys, laying aside all his princely reserve, and assisting them in their work. When, later in the afternoon, he laid aside his bead ornaments, and Umbashi, gathering them up decorated himself with them, and threw a robe over his shoulders declaring that he was an "nazuri bibi" (beautiful damsel), he joined in the fun, and was as ardent as any in his amorous pleadings with the dusky belle.

We followed the river bank down towards the lake for a dozen miles, guided by the Sultani's toto. We drew the boy into conversation as we went along. He said he was Merium, the second son of Lotiki, the Chief of the Kerio section of the Turkana, whose boundaries extended to the Turkwell, where Sultani Aipar's domain began. Drawing near a large tree by the river bank, he pointed it out as the site of one of his father's manyattas, where his women-folk dwell. Turkana manyattas are very small, composed generally of half-a-dozen huts, enclosed by a thorn boma, behind

which the flocks and herds are kraaled at night, and are well hidden among the trees. Although almost on that particular one, we could not see it, and would have passed without knowing it was there, had not the boy taken us across. Three extremely youthful "bibis", clad only in the leathern girdles, heavily ornamented with steel beads, which the Turkana women favour, retreated coyly to the huts with their totos, as we approached, and only one old man and a boy—both quite nude—came to greet us. Merimu spoke with them a while, while we had a look round.

At the end of twelve miles we came to a bend in the river where the stream widened, and being then in full flood, covered a vast extent of sandy flats. It was the point we had been looking for, as it enabled us to get the camels across. A portion of the flats, where some of the water had subsided, was covered with deep, sticky mud, on which the camels floundered and slipped with every stride. While quite at home on rocky ground, camels are almost helpless in the mud. The main body of the river was confined to a narrow bed near the opposite shore, and although it was running swiftly, was quite shallow, and the camels were able to ford it without difficulty. We camped among the palms on the other shore, to allow the camels to graze before striking across the desert again to Lodwar. A small tributary joins the Kerio at that point—the Natomi, according to our guide. Our chart showed us that we should be about seven miles from the junction of the Kerio with the lake, but Merimu informed us the junction was much farther off. We were thus at a loss to define our exact position, but it was not a matter of great moment, as we could make out Losagam Hill across the desert. As our chart showed Losagam about eleven miles south of the Turkwell, and approximately forty miles from Lodwar, we had no fear that we would go astray in the desert.

By six o'clock that morning it was uncomfortably warm tramping across the treeless sand desert, and an

hour later it was decidedly hot. We had not replenished our water supply at the Kerio, because of the mud and mire it contained, and because our guide told us of a soda spring where drinkable water was to be obtained. A few hours later we came to a clump of palms, an isolated patch in the middle of a howling desert, and we were surprised to see clear water oozing out of the sand in several places in the shade of the palms.

A lone Turkana, who apparently rose out of the sand—one minute he was not on the scene and the next he was—was pressed into service as a guide, at that little oasis (our syce had a persuasive manner), and Merimu left us, richer by a few shillings and a coloured cloth, the latter either a gift or a purchase from the syce. Knowing Mahommed Noos never let an opportunity of doing a little private trading slip by, we suspected that it was not a gift.

Glare and sand and blistering heat combined to render the remainder of the day's march an ordeal, and all of our band were relieved when a line of palms, marking a lugga's course, indicated a halting place where we could escape from the rays of the afternoon sun, even though there was no shelter from the dust, and very little hope of getting really cool. We took a meal there of porridge, tea, and bread, spread with Nestle's milk—a typical meal during those months. Towards evening we trekked on, and camped for the night in a lugga near the base of Losagam.

Our camping place was typical of the many we made in that region. It was not unlovely at the hour we reached it. Feathery palms fringed the lugga, and ran in a graceful, swaying line out into the desert, for as many miles as we could see. Losagam behind us, dark and severe in outline, robbed the spot of nothing of its picturesqueness, grim as it appeared in the heat of mid-day.

Across the desert next day we trekked, up dunes and down, passing several dry lugga beds, from one of

which we obtained water by digging, and, early in the afternoon came in sight of Lodwar Hill, at the end of which we knew Lodwar to be situated. A little later we saw the green line of a belt of trees marking the course of the Turkwell. Distances are deceptive in the desert, and although it looked but a few miles off, we did not make it until the morning of the following day.

The dense tropical foliage of its bank, and the flow of water, muddy and shallow though it was, was a treat for our sand-weary eyes. Crossing the carpet of grass under the spreading branches of the trees, seemed to us like stepping out of the wilderness into the Promised Land. Groves by the river edge were swarming with monkeys, and numbers of antelope fled at our approach. We selected a shady spot on the edge of the river, and decided to remain there for the day, leaving just before sunset for Lodwar, which was only a few miles off. While Mahommed Noos was wandering about in the river, resplendent in a military fez, a long shirt and putties, with his trousers over his shoulder, seeking for a fording place for the camels, Jim and I and Umbashi took to the water, and played like kids for three-and-a-half hours. Our particular prank was to wade up against the current and sit down to admire the tropical scenery on either bank as we were whirled downstream by the rushing water. At the appointed time we crossed the river without mishap, despite many gloomy pronouncements by the syce, and passed on through the pleasant green bush, until, just as the sun was setting, we glimpsed a mound of black boulders, and a little later saw the Protectorate flag fluttering over a dreary collection of brown, mud-walled dwellings—Lodwar after 250 miles across the trackless wastes from Marsabit!

Silhouetted against the sunset, an askari, with rifle at the slope, patrolled the top of the mud-walled fort guarding the boma. Lodwar, one of the Empire's loneliest outposts, was about to be gathered into the

shadows of the desolate hills surrounding it, as we wound up the sloping path to the Commissioner's house. A shouted command, a clash of arms, the ringing notes of a bugle sounding clear, and the flag was run down from its mast. It was the end of the last day of the tenth month of our march.

Which direction we were to take when we passed on from Lodwar, we did not, at the time of our arrival, know with any certainty. We had then completed just 4,627 miles, and our path ahead was blocked by a closely-guarded frontier. To the north-west stretched impassable swamps, and to the north-east lay a closed country—lawless Ethiopia. That night we would know where our road lay perhaps, but we suspected that ahead there was no clear road at all. For all that, we were determined that, come what might, we would find a way across that No-Man's-Land between Turkana, Abyssinia, Uganda and the Sudan. We would sleep that night on the borders of the Unknown.

McKean, the District Commissioner, who had, as he had anticipated, arrived at his post by another route in advance of us, had just completed a game of tennis with an officer of the Civil Administration, who was *en route* to take up his duties as Assistant District Commissioner at Lokitaung, ninety-six miles due north, on the fringe of the troubled land. Finding McKean thus, in tennis shorts, it was hard to picture him dealing out slaughter in the midst of a shrieking, fighting band of savages, and yet we had heard the accounts of the cool manner in which he had fought his way through the enemy, at the time of one of the Abyssinian raids, some months before.

Over a "sun-downer" he asked us had we any proposed route in mind. We said we could not enlighten him on that score, and asked if it would be possible to steal past the Havaish, or Abyssinians, along the western border of their country. That suggestion was ruled out as absolutely impossible. The only exit from Turkana in that direction was through the narrow

pass between Mt. Kaiserin and the lake shore. To venture through it, would be to walk into a death-trap. The Merille tribesmen from Abyssinia, incensed with the heavy losses that had been inflicted on them by the forces of the K.A.R. during the recent raid, were massing beyond the pass in an ugly frame of mind, and the garrison at Lokitaung were expecting a raid daily. The Merille were lusting for blood, and to go in amongst them would be inviting death. He could not permit us to make the attempt.

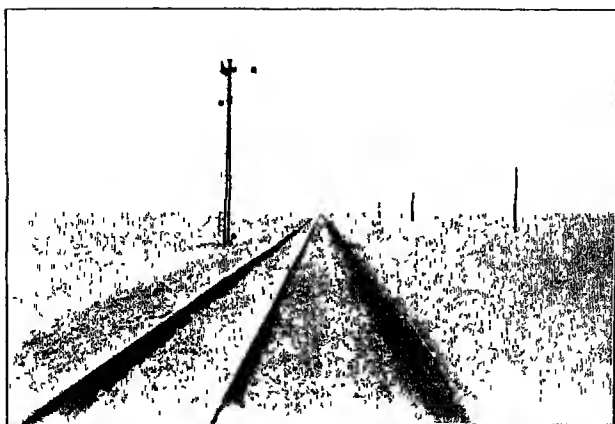
We seemed to have reached an impasse. Abyssinia, Lake Rudolph, No-Man's-Land, and further west again the Lotogipi Swamp—stretched as an unbroken chain of obstacles to our advance. Of the country farther still to the west, nothing was known. Indeed only the most meagre details could be obtained of all the area which lay immediately ahead of us. There were no maps procurable, for the simple reason that it has never been mapped. Sketchy charts, prepared by outpost officers of the K.A.R., and others made by Mr. Hodson, the British Consul in South-West Abyssinia, which we had been able to obtain, contained very little information relating to any wide area of it. They indicated that all the country to the north of Turkana was a waste of liquid mud and swamp in the wet season, and a drought-stricken wilderness in the dry. Unless we could get across it—and it extended for about six hundred miles north and south—we would have to detour still farther to the west, and attempt to negotiate the even worse Sudd area, or go another thousand miles out of our way, and move up through the deserts of French Equatorial Africa. From the Bahr-el-Ghazal Province of the Sudan—which extends out west towards the French boundary, from the west bank of the upper Nile—across to Somaliland, and the Indian Ocean, stretches a barrier that cannot be pierced at any point, save down the narrow ribbon of the Nile. That is why Cecil Rhodes's dream of a Cape to Cairo railway along

the "All Red Route" will always be a dream—unless it be a very crooked railway indeed.

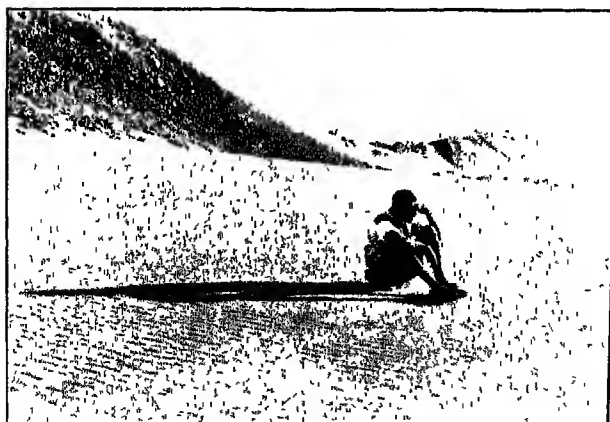
McKean suggested that we make across Northern Turkana to Uganda, cut through the north-eastern corner of that Protectorate, and then carry on as best we might. We had handed over our camels to him, and he promised to loan us Government donkey transport, to carry our kit as far as the Uganda escarpment—and no further.

There appeared to be nothing for it but to accept his advice, and his offer, and take our chances after we had crossed through Uganda. There was undoubtedly trouble threatening beyond Lokitaung, and we wondered what would be the outcome of the massing of the Merille and the Donyiro, beyond Mt. Kaiserin. The inability of the Ethiopian authorities to rule their raiding subjects with a firm hand, had been the subject of many representations from Nairobi to Addis Abbaba—especially following upon raids in which British native subjects had been murdered. Conferences had been held between officers representing both Governments, at various points near the border, from time to time. The Abyssinians had brought forward claims to the territory included on the map as the south-western corner of the Anglo-Egyptian Sudan, during the course of the discussions, but British representatives had tactfully side-stepped that irrelevant side-issue, and pinned the other parties to the conference down to the main matter at issue, namely the steps the Ethiopian authorities intended taking, to prevent any further raids being carried out by their unruly subjects. Promises had been given, compensation had been paid, but an unstable Government had been powerless to check its raiding subjects, and cut-throats from Abyssinia, to this day, join forces with the savages of the South-Western Sudan, in campaigns of rapine and slaughter, into Turkana.

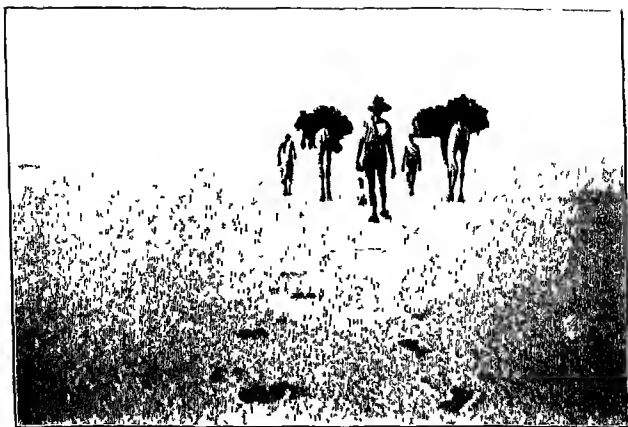
When we met McKean at Fort Hall in June, he had told us that he was to be present at one such conference



The Abu Hamid—Wadi Halfa Railway across the Nubian Desert.



Lumbumbashi.



Desert Tracks—that will probably remain for Years.

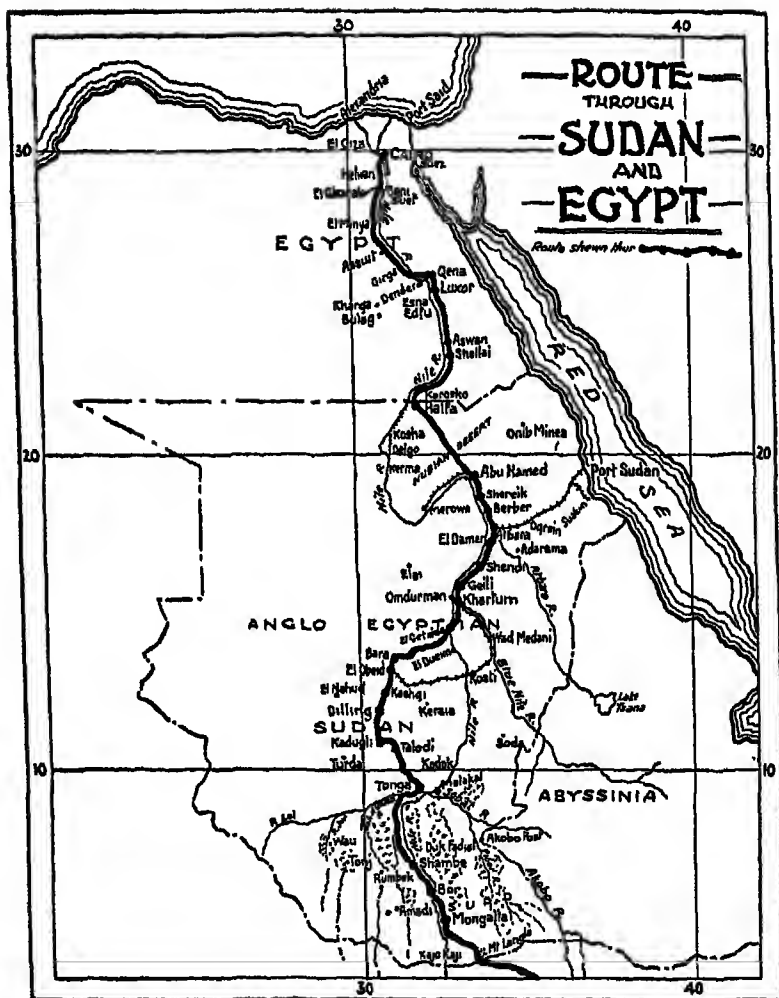


The Camels Feeding on an old Reed Basket found in the Sand.

on his return to Lodwar. A representative of the Governor of the south-eastern province of Abyssinia was to come down from Margi, the capital of the province, to the lake shore, and there confer with McKean, and other British officers. At the time, Jim and I had decided that we would do our utmost to be present at that meeting, and if it could be possibly managed, accompany the Abyssinian delegate back to Margi, with the object of making our way north to Gore, on the western border of Abyssinia, and proceed from there down the Blue Nile to the Nile, thus getting round the greatest barrier in our walk. The delay between Marsabit and Lodwar, however, had upset our plan, for McKean informed us that the meeting had duly taken place a few days before, and the Abyssinian deputy had returned to his own territory. He had, however, proceeded only a short distance over the border, and was sitting down within ten miles of Lokitaung, so as to be in communication with that post if further parleys became necessary. Snapshots of the parties were the only glimpse we ever got of the interesting little conference on the north-western shores of Lake Rudolph.

With the passing of the months, Umbashi's heart—a faithful one, we could vouch for—had grown fonder of the wife he left behind him, in far away Kesika village, in the Mpororkoso district, of the land of rivers and mighty lakes. As far back as Merille lugga, between Isiolo and Marsabit, he had suddenly begun to speak of his Kalumba, and how tenderly he had uttered the musical name! He had said that he wanted five shillings to forward to her, from Marsabit. The constant savage had been thinking deeply of his affairs domestic. He had remarked at the time, that five months had elapsed since he had joined us on the Cairo road. Ere that, he had loitered long at Kasama, and had then gone to Mpororkoso, tramped eighty miles or so to Kawambwa, trekked south along the Luapula to Chief Kasembe's country, where he had

heard of our exploits, and had decided to join up with us, tramping in our wake to Kawambwa once more. Thus many moons had waned since last he had dallied in the realms of connubial bliss, and he reasoned that by that late day, his well-beloved and loving spouse would have worn out an intimate article of underwear which we will spare his blushes by not mentioning. Umbashi considered a new pair essential, if the lady of his choice were not to blush duskily, when Awembe belles were desirous of a peep into her bottom drawer. Umbashi was a man of affairs. Unfortunately, it had not been possible to have the necessary five shillings dispatched on its long journey from Marsabit, but before we left Lodwar, Jim remedied the omission by sending the money to Johannesburg, to be forwarded to the office of the District Officer at Mpororkoso. May curses lie thick upon any purveyor of "Kaffir truck", if the gentle Kalumba was deluded by one of the breed into purchasing shoddy for the genuine "chic" article!



THE LAST STAGE

CHAPTER XVIII

SKIRTING THE BARRIERS

INTO THE UNKNOWN—UP THE UGANDA SCARP—TRANSPORT PROBLEMS—THE SUDAN ENTERED—THE DODINGA PEOPLE—A WHISTLING PYTHON—OUR "TOTO"—BLOCKED BY THE SUDD—NATIVE LOGIC—DETOUR TO THE NILE—NUDE PORTERS—MONGALLA

TEN DIMINUTIVE, sleek-coated Turkana donkeys, shepherded by two native syces, trotted through the gate of Lodwar's surrounding mud wall, on the morning of August 2, and headed for the distant escarpment of Uganda's north-eastern frontier. Seven of them carried our food and belongings, and the remainder, the barramills, or small tanks, containing the water to last us over the first dry stage of our journey. A cloud of dust far out on the flat, thorn-covered waste showed us their position, when, having taken leave of Commissioner McKean, we followed. We caught up with our pack animals within an hour, and when sufficient distance had been put between them and the "civilisation" of Lodwar, the Turkana boys removed every vestige of clothing, and walked "au naturel". Our march across the least-known portion of Africa had started!

Sometime in October we—Wilson, Umbashi and I—hoped to see civilisation again at Khartoum. That the months in between would be more than usually trying, we knew. Fortunately, we could not guess at the real nature of the horrors we were ultimately forced to endure, in the course of that terrible journey. We have not fully recovered from their effects to this day.

A week's trek across the dry plains and barren hills of Turkana, brought us to the Uganda escarpment,

and toiling up the densely-forested slopes of that imposing natural barrier, we had no difficulty in locating Pirre Post, where we were to obtain porters to replace our donkey transport, which was to be returned to Lodwar. Unfortunately the British officer in charge, was away on an eleven days' *safari*, and the native askari in temporary command informed us that no porters were available, all having gone off in the officer's *safari*. We were in a quandary, as we could not afford to wait until the officer returned. At the summit of a mighty mountain towering above the Post, was a helio station, manned by askari of the King's African Rifles. Although the men could not speak a word of English, they knew the letters of the alphabet, and they flashed a message to Kakumari, a more southerly Uganda Post, for us, asking for porters. Next day a reply reached us from Captain Blythe, of the K.A.R., the officer-in-charge:

"Regret porters unprocurable. Advise you use donkeys. Only alternative. Take one N.C.O. and three men as escort, plus any meal you require . . . N.C.O., in charge Pirre Post advised . . . Good luck."

It was an extremely generous offer. The donkeys belonged to the Kenya Government, but we had no alternative other than to commandeer them, so, taking our escort, and their rations, we prepared to trek on, having received information concerning a Sudan outpost on the edge of the swamplands. As we were on the point of starting, a mighty rustling filled the air, and, looking up, we saw a cloud of locusts passing over the Post. Below us a glorious mountain valley fell away to a depth of fully 1,000 feet, and for as far as our eyes could follow its windings, we could see that it, too, was filled with countless millions of the green pests. For half an hour we watched them pouring up the valley, the brushing of their wings against the leaves of the forest trees sounding like the steady pattering of rain. The sun came out as we watched, dis-

persing the mountain mists, and glinting on the green backs and yellow bodies of the locusts. The effect then was as if we were watching the forested slopes opposite through a moving golden screen, that changed to emerald as the flight turned slightly. Presently the leading swarms found their progress blocked by the bulk of 9,000 ft.-Morongole Mountain, at the head of the valley. They rose higher, turned, and commenced pouring back down the valley, above the myriads passing up. Never had we beheld such an extraordinary spectacle as we did then, when those opposite-moving swarms streamed through the sunlit valley. Uganda, as well as Kenya and Tanganyika, were plagued that year by the devouring pests—they did thousands of pounds' worth of damage to plantations and crops.

All being in train for the march off down the mountain side—the donkeys saddled; the four askari lined up, uniformed, buckled and belted, and with rifles at the slope; the naked donkey-boys recovered from their shivering, consequent on being turned out in the chill morning; and ten small, fat-tailed, Persian sheep—the *safari's* meat ration—rounded up, we returned the sergeant's salute, exchanged "Kwa heris" (Goodbyes), and started, knowing that on the following night we would be lighting our camp fires in the Sudan.

Seventeen miles through deep grass and fields of waving yellow flowers, by forested ravines, and across many a sandy river bed, thicket-grown and cool, where tiny trickles of water ran, brought us to the northern border of Uganda, and the following morning the Sudan was entered. At seven o'clock in the morning of that day we pushed through the low bush and tall grass, passed the granite-crested Horogo Hill, and descending into the bed of the Leopok River, began our trek across the second last of the territories we had to cross.

We found ourselves on a wide plain, dotted with green shrubs, and covered by deep, waving grass.

Uganda's mountains circled behind us—Morongole's mighty bulk dominating the view in that direction. Mount Zulia, the massive crown of which was just visible above the nearer range on our right, marked the north-eastern angle of Uganda, and between it and Lotuke Mountain, straight ahead, stretched in an unbroken line, yet more hills, so that we were enclosed, on all except the north-western side of the plain, by mist-enshrouded ranges, or towering mountain masses.

There was some semblance of track across the plain, but it was hard, even guided by our askari, to keep on it, because of the great depth of grass that obscured it, and several times the *safari* found itself wandering through the grass a great distance from the ill-defined track. Rhino paths and other game tracks crossed the path at intervals, and were frequently followed by mistake. A herd of kongoni—the first we had seen since leaving the Masai reserve—led me off, in company with an askari, on a chase, but we lost them among the ridges, and I was given a further opportunity of verifying the askari's statement that it was easy to lose one's way in that broken country.

During that hunt over broken country one of my soles tore away from my boot, and had to be tied on with laces. Temporary repairs to our footwear had been effected by a native "fundi" at Kakuma Post, between Lodwar and Pirre Post, but one sole had come away from my boot again the first day out, and my footwear now presented an outlandish appearance—camel-hide, laced on with a network of thongs, on one boot, and a much-tattered ushide sole, kept in place by a weird arrangement of laces and strings, on the other. Jim's boots were in little better condition, and we reckoned that if repairs were not soon effected at some Post, we would be reduced to wearing native sandals.

A couple of tsetse-fly announced their presence by several stinging thrusts in the small of my back, and caused us grave concern, because of the donkeys. If

the pests happened to sting them it would be the end of them, for no beasts can long survive the attack of the terrible tsetse. Fortunately it appeared that the only few flies in the whole district had singled me out for their attentions, for we encountered no more of them.

Lotuke came in plain view, and below its deeply-cut, thickly-wooded ravines, we came on to a broad flat expanse, on which the grass grew seven or eight feet in height. Half of one day we pushed through the grass, passing around the base of Lotuke Mountain, and sun set found us with still several miles to go to water. A herd of kongoni further delayed our march, as we were also out of meat, and we tarried until Jim dropped a fine bull.

It was almost dark before the nyama was cut up and loaded on the donkeys, and it was quite dark when we began the ascent of Lotuke's slopes. A watery moon showed up the rock-strewn, thorn-covered mountain-side, and a bad piece of country it looked. Donkeys stumbled and slipped, separated and crashed into the trees in the darkness, at half a dozen different points. They became wedged in between huge rocks and tree trunks, struggled, pushed and turned until loads, saddle and all were pulled off, and they then dashed away up hill or down. It was arduous work for everyone. Every man of us was tired, hungry and thirsty, and about seven miles of that slow, torturing track wound up before us. One moment we would be in among the thorns on our hands and knees, trying to extricate a particularly stupid "punda" (donkey) from a jam; the next we would ourselves be wedged in among trees and rocks, by half a dozen animals crowding into a space that would not accommodate two comfortably; then a load would come off, and pots and pans go rattling away through the boulders in all directions. It was a weary march. In the rear a cheerful piccanin, who had begged permission to accompany his father on the march, shepherded nine stout-hearted little sheep up the difficult places. He

was greatly impressed with the importance of his task, and there were no complaints from that quarter.

About 9 p.m. we caught sight of a camp fire on the hillside above us, and half an hour later we reached a waterhole by a Dodinga village, among the rocks, and camped for the night. All hands were utterly wearied out, for we had been on the march for seventeen hours. There was much to do, however, before we could sleep. Water had to be brought, thorn bomas built to protect the animals, beds and mosquito-nets erected, and supper prepared. Our first day in the Sudan had been a strenuous one, and we wondered, as we dozed to slumber, what the remainder of the journey across that territory would bring forth.

Our camp had been made high up the slope of the mountain, and our track next morning wound down through the hills to the plain below. That plain, we knew, stretched to the edges of the swamplands, and we knew also that before many suns had set we would be up against the greatest barrier in the whole march.

The welcome sound of a torrent tumbling down through a gorge, allowed Jim and I to forget for a while the problem ahead of us, and we went off and revelled for half an hour in the glorious cold water, allowing the foaming shower to cascade down over us until we were in danger of being smothered by it. It infused new life into us, after the exhausting trek of the day before.

While dressing, as curious-looking a native as we had ever clapped eyes on, came down the hill-side and greeted us. His shining black skin boasted not a single rag or ornament, but his head-dress was a sight to gaze upon. At first sight it appeared as if he wore a wide brimmed hat very like an inverted basin, that shaded his face and shoulders. The material in it resembled compressed black wool, and indeed we found it was fashioned from that product, for when Umbashi went to examine it, and made an attempt to remove it, the agonised yell of the native advised us that it was not detachable. It was, in short, his own wooly hair woven

into a head-covering. A closer examination showed us that it had been plaited and woven into the required shape as it had grown. The brim was quite an inch thick, and about two feet in diameter—quite the most sensible of the many varied and grotesque head-dresses we had seen. Beyond a shining metal pin, about four inches in length, and about the thickness of a pencil, that was skewered through his bottom lip, he possessed no other adornments. In his hand he carried two broad-bladed spears, and a small wooden neck-rest—the universal native “pillow”. He was a Dodinga. We saw scores of them later in the day, all of them identical in appearance with the first-comer. The mountains, which we were then skirting, and of which Lotuke is the highest southern peak, are their home, and are known as the Dodinga Highlands.

We came on one of the Dodinga villages, and spent an interesting half-hour there, making friends with the menfolk, and with one withered old hag, who begged tobacco from me. The totos were frightened badly by our appearance, and set up a wailing and sobbing that their parents were unable to quieten. The more reticent damsels scurried to their huts, and peeped at us shyly through the narrow doorways. Their thatch huts, shaped like beehives, are not greatly dissimilar from those to be found in any African village, yet are not quite identical with any others. Huts of all African tribes have some distinguishing features that mark them apart from the huts of every other tribe.

Leaving the village, we continued down a winding track, until the mountain slopes rose above us, like a wall hung with green tapestries. Four-and-a-half miles of slow going brought us to Eros Camp—a collection of rest huts erected by a Sudan Commissioner from Loryok, a Post, which until a short time before, had been the Administrative headquarters for the district. Within the past twelve months Loryok had been abandoned, and the Officer in Charge had moved out to Kapoetta, on the very edge of the swamps. Our route

from Eros Camp lay along a road which the Commissioner had put down for administrative purposes, and which ran through Loryok, on to Kapoetta. After a fortnight of travelling almost "blind", and uncertain as to whether or not we would be able to establish communications with a Sudan Post south of the swamps, the road was a more than welcome sight. It remained to be seen what information relating to the country ahead could be obtained at Kapoetta.

Hugging the mountains closely on our right, we traversed endless Dodinga grain plantations, after leaving Eros, walking through terrific heat throughout the day. Sunset was doubly welcome because of the relief it brought, and because of the beauty that suffused the sky, and spread across the land, as the disc slipped below the horizon.

We had surmounted a low line of hills, and descended to the plain once more. Before us a sweeping vista of fresh green fields, separated one from the other by dark lines of trees, gave the impression of meadows girt with hedgerows, and, away beyond the billowing sea of green, rose up an uneven line of blue peaks, peeping above a nearer weep of tree-covered hills. The western sky, purple with heavy thunder clouds, lightened in broad sweeps of flashing gold, as the sun went down through the dark rain mists that veiled it. Upland slopes, on our right, deeply forested with graceful trees, also caught the spreading beams of light, and delicate patterns of lighter green were traced on the darkening tops of the branches. The whole was as delightful a sylvan picture as one could wish for—and that in the Sudan. We found it frequently necessary to alter preconceived notions of a great deal of Africa.

We were halted that night by the action of the "punda", who refused to attempt the crossing of a flimsy bamboo bridge over a dry steep-sided river bed. We were out of water, and had intended making for a rest-camp we had been told of, at Chukudum—a Police Post of the Sudan Administration—but the "punda"

resolutely refused to be persuaded, and there we had to stay for the night.

It appeared as if we would have a strenuous hour or so urging the donkeys to attempt that bridge next morning, but after about five minutes of resultless persuasion, the little animals relieved the situation, and considerably astonished us, by slipping down the absolutely vertical twelve-foot bank, and scaling the opposite one, which had a slope of two in three, with apparent ease, despite their loads. We reached Chukudum after a pleasant walk of several hours, past glorious tree-covered slopes and wondrous granite pinnacles, which we kept on our right.

A Sudanese lance-corporal, in charge of the Post, saluted us smartly, showed us to the rest-hut, and there left us to enjoy a welcome rest, and long draughts of clear, cold water, from the comfort of the camp chairs left by the District Officer. The day had been another scorcher, and it was with relief that we heard the rain commencing to patter down on the eaves of the hut as we sat at lunch. Comely Sudanese damsels brought water in large pots to replenish our barramills, and having deposited it in Umbashi's kitchen, gathered round to steal a peep at the white bwanas. Having satisfied themselves about the curiosities, they went back to flirt with Umbashi, and question him endlessly about ourselves. Native damsels are very inquisitive.

The sky continued overcast, and, the air being fresh and cool after the rain, we made good progress for the next few days, under ideal conditions. The persistent refusal of the donkeys to attempt the crossing of the numerous bamboo bridges, flung over the dry torrent-beds, delayed us slightly at times, but they made up for the loss of time by trekking smartly after the obstacles were negotiated. One night we camped in a cleft in the hills, and as we sat at supper a peculiar shrill whistling sound came suddenly from the dense undergrowth on the slopes rising above us. It con-

tinued with but slight pauses for about half an hour, and then moved off higher up the mountain side. We were greatly puzzled, for it seemed to be a sound for which neither bird nor beast was responsible. The askari were unanimous in their belief that the noise was made by a large python, and we recalled having heard a similar sound in the forest above the old crater at Marsabit, when the natives also swore that it was made by an "nyorka" (snake). As we were dozing off under our nets later in the evening we heard the sound drawing closer and closer, until the originator of it appeared to pass through the undergrowth a few yards off. Rapidly it encircled our camp, appeared to sheer away from our fire, and, when we went to investigate, seemed to rise up over the tops of the trees in the vicinity. It was a shrill, whistling hiss, or rather a harsh, strident whistle ending in a hiss. If it were a python, and we were at a loss to account for the movements it made, unless it was a snake, the evidence it furnished that night was certainly a contribution to the controversy which has raged in various periodicals relating to a snake's vocal attainments. We hoped it was not hungry, whatever it was, and retired under our nets to sleep.

That night we corralled our donkeys on a broad strip of bamboo matting, the material used in the construction of the local bridges, and the device produced good results. Not once after that did they hold us up at the bridges, the fears engendered by the flimsy appearance of those structures, having been conquered by the "punda" as the result of their having been kept on the material throughout one night.

We passed from the red-soil country a couple of days later, and entered the black cotton-soil plains—the swamplands were drawing nearer. Rain fell, and continued pouring down steadily day after day. The cotton-soil was thick and sticky, and clung to our boots in large chunks, weighting them down so heavily that it was a task to lift them. The rough moccasins we had made and laced over our boots, once they became

thoroughly caked with the clayey mcss, presented a comical sight. With their mud coating they protruded about six inches beyond each end of our boots, and bulged at the sides, so that it appeared as if our feet were encased in huge mud-plastered baskets. At the end of many miles the labour of trudging through the morass in them became too heavy, and for long distances we tramped bare-foot, and slung the boots over our shoulders, to the broad delight of Umbashi, and the entertainment of the other natives in the party. Unfortunately in places the road rose over ridges of the hills, which still towered above us, and our feet were tortured by sharp pebbles and hard rock, but it was infinitely preferable to dragging along boots weighing about six pounds each.

A few days later we arrived at Loryok, where we found that the District Commissioner from Kapoetta still kept a partly-furnished bamboo and thatch bungalow, for use when his duties brought him to that district. The walk to that Post was more in the nature of a pleasant Sunday morning stroll through the hills at home, than a trek through a section of one of the Sudan's "restive provinces". On arrival there we found several police boys in charge, and learned that they understood no Swahili whatever—Arabic being the universal language spoken from that point onward. We were unable to speak it then, and anticipated that our language difficulties would be revived, until we picked up some smattering of Arabic. Swahili had stood us in good stead in the Congo, Northern Rhodesia, Tanganyika, Kenya, and Uganda, but its usefulness had run out at last.

Since reaching Lotuke Mountain we had been following around the foot of the Dodinga Highlands, or, in places, passing through the foothills. The bare granite pinnacles and mighty wooded hills, which we left behind as we passed from Loryok, marked the north-western limits of the highlands, and we entered on flat, grass-covered mbugwe, or black cotton soil plain which

stretched away to the horizon before us, unmarked by hill or ridge. We were on the threshold of the terrible Sudd, that swampy, uninhabited, for the great part unexplored, stretch of territory that imposes an almost impassable barrier across the route to Cairo.

Baulked in our desire to proceed north via Abyssinia, and turned away from the unsettled Merille country, we were about to commence our third attempt to break through to Khartoum, hoping at Kapoetta to obtain some information concerning a tentative route that we had mapped out, from the meagre details obtainable from the few charts of the area we had managed to get hold of. That route would take us north-east over towards the Abyssinian border, pass through large unexplored areas, skirt hostile country, and cross through territory reputed to be impassable in the rains, to an isolated Sudan Post on the Pibor River. Following the Pibor down to its junction with the Sobat, at Akobo Post, we planned to work along the Sobat to the Nile, which we hoped to join near Kodok, or Fashoda.

The road which we had been following dwindled to a muddy track through the yielding cotton-soil, and high grass walled us in on either side as we advanced further and further out on to the limitless rain-sodden plain—out towards the last Post on the southern fringe of the wastes.

Day broke on a grey, rain-soaked world two days later. Before us a level expanse of black cotton-soil plain, hidden beneath thick, wet elephant grass twelve to fourteen feet high, rolled away to the leaden line of the horizon. A watery, cheerless sun appeared for an instant from behind heavy dark rain-clouds, that pressed low on the then distant peaks of the Dodinga hills; a bleak wind sent waves sweeping through the sodden grass; a few spots of rain fell, and the dull rumble of far-off thunder gave warning that the menace of foul weather contained in the grey-black cloud masses, banking above the eastern skyline, would be fulfilled ere long.



A Sheik's Tomb near Wadi Halfa.



An Irrigation Wheel over a Well in a Nile Village.



The Ruins of an Ancient Hill City near Abu Simbel, a few Tombs in the Foreground The Shellal-Halfa Reach, Egypt



The Rock Temple of Abu Simbel built by Rameses II The Shellal-Halfa Reach

Across that desolate wilderness, we hoped to find our way to Khartoum, 1,000 miles beyond. We had temporarily discarded our worn-out boots, and were walking barefoot. Kapoetta, set down in the swamps a year before, to keep watch on gun-runners and ivory poachers from Abyssinia, lay a few miles ahead. Our hopes that we would be able to push on beyond it were rudely shattered, when we were still a dozen miles from it. The two officers in charge of the Post, advised of our coming by helio, came out to meet us. There, among the wind-blown grass, while two great hartebeeste, ghostly-looking in the dull light, looked on, the officers told us we could go no further. Beyond their Post, for 400 miles at least, was nothing but mud and water. Neither man nor beast could cross it. Kapoetta was the farthest point in the waste to which it was possible to penetrate. The officers cast anxious eyes at the inky-black storm centre, and murmured that they must return at once, if they were to return at all. Once the rain broke, the way to their post would be impassable. Our only course was to retrace our steps, and detour a further 200 miles to the west, to Mongalla, on the Nile. We turned as the rain commenced falling.

Our thoughts were sombre as we walked. We had been beaten again, and it appeared that from Mongalla we would have to make the long detour to the west, out towards the border of French Equatorial Africa in order to get around the accursed Sudd. Back past our camp of the previous night we trudged in silence, and reached Loryok that evening, having covered most of the distance barefoot. We made ourselves comfortable in the District Commissioner's quarters, and after supper settled down to slumber in the mosquito-proof cubicle that the place boasted. For a rest-camp that was only visited at long intervals it was a really luxurious place. Truly the men of the Empire's outposts do themselves very well indeed.

Our intention was to take the donkeys and the escort to a village, some seventeen miles off the track by which

we had come, in the direction of Mongalla, and there pick up native porters once more. We conveyed that information to the askari in charge of the escort, and then complaints began to flow. A native who has not a few complaints to voice on almost any occasion, does not hail from Africa. The main trouble this time was that their grain-meal was almost exhausted—that despite the fact that they had assured us at Pirre Post that the meal we took from there for them would be sufficient for the journey to Kapoetta and return. Native-like they had almost finished it up with but half of their journey completed. It was no use our explaining to them that they deserved to starve. They would not have understood. They had been hungry, and they had eaten—which was a logical sort of a thing to have done. That they had not husbanded their ration as they should have done, they would not agree. They had been hungry etc., etc. . . . Bwana must be very dense not to see how simple it all was. Once they had had enough for the whole journey. Beyond doubt, it had been enough. They had all been certain of it. Now, with half the journey gone, they had only two days' rations left. Well, there was "duka" at Loryok, so if the Bwana bought some more grain there would be enough once more. Simple! Of course, if Bwana would not buy any more, they would have to starve, which would be very hard on them.

We gave up arguing logic with them, and paid a visit to the "duka", making our first transaction in Egyptian currency. We had only East African pounds with us, but our askari corporal explained to the native in charge of the "duka" that it was good money, and worth 97 piastres. We purchased eighteen rotls (approximately eighteen pounds) of rice for 30 piastres (6s. 2d.), and were amused to see the miscellaneous collection of odds and ends used as scale weights. First, the sack which was to hold the rice was compensated for in the other pan with lumps of odd metal, a box of matches, and an onion, and then the

eighteen rotls were made up with numbers of spear heads. A rough, but fair method. Having made our purchases, we followed at a fast pace with the askari, in the wake of the "punda". The day was decidedly hot, and there was little pleasure in covering the same ground again. Baboons fled into the hills as we distributed their gatherings, the "old men" among them barking angrily at the intrusion on their peace and quietness. A venomous little snake—a kalambwa, the askari called it—wriggled across in front of us and puffed up its neck alarmingly, as we came close. I put my boot on it, and it sank its fangs into the soft leather moccasin, before it gave its last convulsive wriggle. The boys said it was an extremely poisonous specimen. That same day we reached the point at which we intended striking off for Mongalla, and took a clearing through the deep grass, that in the dry season was an administrative road. Rain had turned the track into a quagmire, and walking again became a trying business, forcing us at length to discard our boots once more. Crossing the Kideppo River, we halted at a village nestling at the foot of a great granite hill, amongst a thick belt of trees. The young sub-chief of the village came to pay his respects, had milk and eggs brought us, and promised that the nine porters we required would be available early next morning.

Boot repairs, repacking our baggage into loads suitable for native portorage, and other tasks, occupied the remainder of our day. In the evening Jim went down to a bout of malaria, but decided to push on next morning, according to our arrangement.

We noticed that our boots were almost cemented to the floor of the rest-hut, when we went to collect them the following morning. White ants, ever busy in that humid climate, had got to work on the soles, and had eaten a pattern into them, the masticated material being used as a cement. Left to the insatiable appetites of the termites, those boots would have been entirely consumed within a week.

Jim was still very feverish when we turned out, and hardly fit for a long day's march, but decided it was better to walk than lie up. Our nine porters arrived in good time. They were a dull-looking crew. Civilization has not touched the natives of those parts, and our recruits were stark naked to a man. They each carried a spear, and a circular pad of woven reeds, the latter being placed on their heads as a rest for their load when carrying. A few had animal skins sewn into bags, in which they carried a little grain and food, but beyond those trifles, they had nothing.

The track ran between fields of native corn, and on either hand we passed villagers engaged in their rude husbandry. Some, equipped with long poles, at one end of which was a curious-shaped blade, were cutting back the high grass preparatory to hoeing the earth for the reception of seed—the latter operation being performed with the reverse or pronged end of the pole. Others, women and children mostly, were perched at the top of bamboo towers, set at various points in the fields, scaring away birds and animals from the corn, by shouting, blowing on bamboo horns, or by pulling on strings strung across the fields, to which were attached a collection of jangling tins. Here and there women, clad in nothing but a few square inches of fringed leather, or a few wisps of straw strung around their waists, were keeping the road clear of grass.

The journey to Mongalla was without incident, but our path was beset with difficulties. It teemed from late afternoon, and throughout the night, almost continuously. The heat during the day was little short of stifling, and mosquitoes plagued us at night. We had to discard our boots, and take to wearing native sandals. To add to Jim's troubles the ardours of marching were increased many-fold by the malaria, which persisted for more than half the journey. However, we made good progress, and had no serious delays. At Torit we made the acquaintance of yet another Englishman, the Bimbashi in charge of a detachment of the Sudan Equatorial

Force. From him we learned that the only route we would be able to take from Mongalla would be to trek west to Rumbek and Tonge, cross the Bahr el Ghazal at Wau, trek still further west, and cross the River Lol somehow or other, proceed on to Shakka, and so El Fasher, 200 miles from the border of French Equatorial. From there we would have to swing back to El Obeid, cross the desert, to join the Nile again below Khartoum, a distance of about 1,400 miles—and Khartoum is about 850 miles from Mongalla by the steamer route.

The Major informed us incidentally that the country to the north of Mongalla was very unsettled, and he himself had just returned from an expedition against the Nuba tribe in the country east of the Nile.

Shortly after leaving Torit, we reached Keneti Rest Camp, run by Motor Tours, Ltd., a concern which has a transport service operating between Rejaf, on the Nile near Mongalla, and Nairobi, in the dry season. After several months we had linked up once more with a highway to civilization, as, near Keneti the main road to Nairobi turns away to the south. Jim and I decided on the extravagance of a pot of tea at the camp—and an extravagance it proved, at 3s. for a pot of tea with a few biscuits, which the native in charge served. While we awaited its arrival, we wiled away half an hour by scanning through the comments in the visitors' book. Never had we seen such a collection of signatures of Prominent Personages—Lords, Ladies, Counts, Barons, and numbers of folk from the United States whose wealth was a byword.

One American lady, after eulogising the service at the Camp—which by the way is entirely staffed by natives—made the entry . . . "Stars! Romance!" We could only see mud and grass, but then it was broad daylight. Another entry, made by a Commander and his Lieutenant, who signed themselves as distressed aviators who had crashed in the vicinity, read "Bed only. One night. One pound!!" We looked

at the list of charges, and found that they had paid 8s. too little. Travel even in the wilder parts of Africa comes as an expensive business.

We ran into a very bad tsetse-fly belt some miles past Keneti, and for a couple of days they tortured us vilely. There are bad sleeping-sickness areas in the Mongalla province, and we hoped that none of the pests were infected with the dread disease. One can never tell until months later whether sleeping sickness has been contracted, and after being plagued by the fly, one is never very comfortable until a decent interval of time has elapsed without the symptoms showing. Fortunately, we suffered no ill effects from the bites we received in that area.

Near Mongalla a motor truck came towards us, and we made the acquaintance of a Mr. Rusk, once of the West Coast, but then an officer of the Sudan Public Works Department. He was bound for his camp near Rejaf, he having been very ill at Mongalla for some weeks, suffering with a poisoned arm, which he had gone very near to losing. At Rejaf he was engaged in constructing the last link in the "All-weather Route" between Capetown and Cairo—the making of a road between Rejaf and Nimule, ninety-two miles distant. At its completion travellers will be able to proceed by river and road for the full distance from January to December.

Rejaf was then the terminus of the Nile steamer route, though it was in process of being replaced by Juba, lower down the river, and nearer Mongalla. A hotel was being erected at Juba at a cost of £4,000, and it was expected that the headquarters of the Mongalla Province would be removed to there from Mongalla before long. When the transfer is completed Mongalla will disappear from the map, and Juba, linking up Capetown by road through Uganda and Kenya, as well as through the Belgian-Congo via Abba, with the Nile route to Cairo, will become a very important place in British Africa. Ill as he was, our acquaint-

tance had been so fired with the importance of the work to be done, that he would not tarry at Mongalla, but was itching to get on to the job once more. He was typical of the men who serve the Empire, in whatever capacity, in its least hospitable corners.

We reached Mongalla at the end of August, and to our great joy were handed a bundle of twenty-four letters, and some newspapers from home—the first we had received since leaving Nairobi early in June. They had come via Cairo and Khartoum, and were an indication at long last that we were in direct communication with our goal, which however, was still about 2,600 miles off by the shortest route.

Our first call at Mongalla after visiting the post office was on the Governor of the Province, Mr. Balfour. He placed a rest hut on the banks of the Nile at our disposal, and invited us over to dinner to discuss our proposed route with him. He told us he had despatched telegrams to Khartoum asking permission for us to travel through the closed areas of the southern Sudan, he having been advised of our coming on the previous day. No reply could be expected for a few days, and until it arrived, we would have to wait at Mongalla.

Our host was very obliging. He loaded us up with reading matter, sent his boy over to our rest hut with meat and vegetables, and arranged for milk to be supplied. Considering that not enough, he made us promise to ask for anything we required. As we had come uninvited into a closed territory, his treatment of us was chivalrous in the extreme.

We slept that night for the first time in months in a real bed, protected from the mosquitoes that buzzed about us in myriads, by a tent-like net.

CHAPTER XIX

SUDD HORRORS

MONGALLA NIGHTS—BLOCKED AGAIN—BY BARGE THROUGH THE
SUDD—SUNSET ON THE NILE—CAST ADrift—THE STORK PEOPLE—
TONGA—A NIGHT OF HORROR—MAROONED—THE SHALLUK—WE
TAKE TO DUG-OUTS—IN THE SWAMPS—THE BULLS

IF ONE really wishes to appreciate the pleasant thoughts of two idle fellows on waking, the morning following our arrival on the Nile bank, one must walk for many long miles—say, 1,000 without sleeping once between sheets, turn out with the dawn each day, and walk until sunset and after. One must go hungry and thirsty; be scorched by blistering suns, and then go rain-soaked for days; travel footsore and wearied, on and on—and then wake to hear the welcome sound of a shouted “chi tiari”, and know that tea is ready. The knowledge that breakfast will follow anon, and that a bath is even then being filled, will increase one’s delights. To know that books lie at hand to be read, that a whole glorious day of rest has come, after countless ones of strenuous effort, and that there are still some unopened letters to be read, will fill one’s cup of joy to overflowing! That was our experience, and it was truly glorious.

With the first transports of joy at our arrival over, we settled down to wait for the telegram from Khartoum. Mongalla on longer acquaintance lost much of its charm. It was swelteringly hot, the humidity was exceptionally high, and we had never been so plagued by mosquitoes. There was nowhere to go in the neighbourhood, as most of the country was under water, and deeply grass-grown. Occasionally, at night, elephants came down to drink at the river on the far

bank, and raised a din with their trumpeting, but we got no hunting on our side. The ceaseless beating of tomtoms in the village added to the horrors of the oppressive nights. Natives have no sense of the monotonous. Compared with the beating of a native drum, "Ta-rada-boom-di-ay," repeated five thousand times without pause, would be a varied melody. Sometimes as we lay of a steaming night, endeavouring to court slumber, and the tum-tum-tumpety-tum-tum struck on our ears for hour after hour, we entertained a wild hope that before morning some native with a single gleam of imagination would be driven stark, raving, mad, and would fall upon the author of the horrible din and tear him and his instrument of torture to pieces, but it never happened. There was no native in all that part of Africa with a smattering of imagination.

On the fifth day we received advice that we could not follow the route we had mapped out, as it was impassable because of the floods. We were informed that we would have to turn again south-west, travel along the border of the Belgian-Congo, via Tembura, skirt the border of French Equatorial Africa, and then swing right back east again to Wau. That meant that the first stage of our detour around the Sudd would take us 600 miles in order to bring us to a place only 375 miles from Mongalla. At Wau we were to obtain further instructions, and the probability was that several more hundreds of miles would be added to our trek. Altogether we would be obliged to walk 1,600 miles in order to reach Khartoum. We had already travelled 5,000 miles from Capetown, and if we accepted the further detour we would have travelled over 8,000 miles before we reached Cairo. Finally we decided that it was imperative that we proceed 300 miles by river to Tonga, thus getting through the worst of the Sudd, and trek on through the swamps from there, to El Obeid. If we succeeded in getting through, we intended striking straight across the southern Libyan Desert to Khartoum. We acquainted the Governor

with our decision, purchased our stores at the Société du haut Uele et du Nil, a well-stocked store on the Nile bank, and joined the s.s. *Zafir*, when she came in from Rejaf at 2 p.m. Our funds were temporarily very low, and could not be augmented until we reached Khartoum. Pushing past a crush of natives of all creeds and classes, gathered about the gangway, we inquired the fare from a coloured official. It was £10 each, besides the cost of meals—an additional 16s. a day on the steamer, and half that amount on one of the second-class barges attached to the steamer. Now although the barges are intended for natives only, we decided we would have to sink our pride, and stomach the odours and general vileness of the barge. It needed all our powers of endurance to install ourselves with a polyglot crew of Egyptians, Sudanese and coloured people on that filthy vessel, but we did it.

Huge bundles of sugar cane, great bunches of bananas—brought aboard by the natives as food for the journey—heaps of merchandise, bundles of rags, and unwashed families of low-class Egyptians littered the dirty steel lower-deck of our barge, and on the upper deck, where we decided to take up our quarters, a crowd of low-class natives were herded like cattle. One of the two third-class barges—the top deck of which sheltered native servants, and the lower the ship's livestock—pressed closely against our quarters, and a crate of noisome poultry took up all the available space on the prow of our barge. We found room on a strip of deck a few yards square to erect our stretchers, and there we remained throughout our strange journey. The space at our disposal was considerably restricted by an oblong man-hole in the centre of it, through which natives kept passing up and down between decks.

For our ablutions there was a bucket with a rope attached, which we cast over into the Nile and hauled back, when we required a wash. There was one comfort—our meals were to be served at a table on the afterpart of the steamer, and if we succeeded in

negotiating the tables and the yawning gap between the barges and the steamer, no mean feat in the darkness, we were assured of privacy for an hour or two, at least, every day.

Umbashi we installed on the third-class barge, where he prepared his own food, slept the day away, and appeared well content.

We were very pleased when the gang-plank was up, and the steamer, with its four barges attached, moved off down-stream. For half an hour or so, we sat on our little deck, cursing the stifling heat, and watching the low, swampy banks slip by. Then we ran aground on a bank, and stayed there for three hours. The sun was going down before the exertions of the flustered little paddle-steamer succeeded in getting us free. The breeze freshened, purple darkness descended on papyrus and river, and we went sliding down with the small islets of grass and reeds, that became detached from the soggy banks. Ahead, between two sombre cloudbanks, the sky still showed crimson in the sunset afterglow, and the glamour of a tropic night held us in thrall, despite the attentions of the mosquito hordes. Soon the glow faded from the sky, and a new moon rose up. Thatched huts loomed up through the darkness, nestling in the reeds close to the river's banks. Our cumbersome craft nosed in towards the tiny village in the swamp, banged hard against the shore, and we had the opportunity of stretching our legs for a space at Terrakeka, while wood-fuel was taken on board, though we could not wander far, because of the papyrus that hemmed us in on all sides. The ship's siren recalled us after a short interval, and on into the night we went once more.

The mosquitoes sent us early to bed. Devout Moslems, intoning their unending prayers in the dreariest of voices, kept us awake for a while, and then, when we did get off, we were not left long undisturbed. At some little riverside halting-place natives came on board and deposited a load of what appeared to be pepper, on our barge. The stuff descended on us in a cloud as the

natives dumped sacks of it down on the decks, got into our throats and lungs, and irritated us sorely. In spite of the heat we were compelled to withdraw our heads under the plankets to avoid it, and eventually got some sleep.

A terrific banging and bumping, and the sound of reeds sweeping the side of our barge, awoke us a little after midnight. Our vessel scraped along the bank, and then spun round as the current caught it, and swirled across to the other shore, where it banged with a second terrific impact. Again we were whirled off, and went twirling and spinning down the river like a barrel in a racing torrent. At every bend in the stream we were brought up with a crash and a jar, that threatened to tear the sides out of our barge. A huge earthenware pitcher of water on a stand by my head rocked ominously at every bump, and I had visions of a crushed skull before morning. Some of its contents splashed over me every time we hit the bank, and I was uncomfortably damp in a very short time. The racket disturbed the poultry and the goats, and the horrors of the hour before dawn were increased by an untuneful medley of bleating and crowing, rendered more nerve-racking by the fearful confusion set up when two enthusiastic worshippers of Allah commenced vying with each other in yelling his praises.

When morning came we learned that the steamer had run on a bank at midnight, and had cast us off in order to make easier the task of freeing itself. For all we knew it was still stuck there, and we went bounding and bumping merrily down the Nile, not knowing if we would fetch up south of Khartoum, or beyond it. Being adrift meant that we were cut off from our meals, though that worried me little, as the sousing overnight had brought on a severe chill, and before that day was far advanced I was driven perspiring and shivering to my stretcher, suffering from a return bout of malaria.

All day we continued our slow, but violent, passage down the river. Early in the afternoon we came up with

a barge that had been cast off separately, and having bumped it with a gusto that jeopardised its river-worthiness, linked ropes with it, and we continued in company on the hurdy-gurdy of the banging, bumping journey.

Jim filled in the morning taking lessons in Arabic, from a native official on the barge, and at mid-day he entertained me with a fine selection of the language. It sounded very impressive at first, but when I pressed him to translate, it turned out that he knew about forty words. The praying was worse than ever that night, but no more pepper was loaded, and when we stuck in a creek, and the steamer picked us up, we were spared many further bumpings.

Occasionally we passed little wood stations put down in the heart of the Sudd on a few feet of ground that rose a little above the river level. Now and again, too, we came on two or three native huts, squeezed on to a strip of land by the water's edge, and saw perhaps half a dozen natives squatting about them. Than these miserable, naked savages, there can be no worse situated members of the human family on this earth. Their home is a vast swamp—perhaps the worst on the face of the globe. Most of them have canoes, and can move about in them, but some seemed to have no other means of getting about that waterlogged waste than on their long, stork-like legs. It is a remarkable fact, but Nature seems in them to have evolved a Stork People. Constant walking about in swamps has, in the course of generations, given those Sudd dwellers abnormally long legs, and, in their relatively small bodies, tucked up at the abdomen, one could see how the attitude adopted in walking through cold water and high reeds has had the effect of altering, permanently, their bodily structure, so that now they are born with bodies of that type. Strange, but quite true.

At night we swung round a bend, and found ourselves almost on top of a campfire, around which were gathered a few natives. At the time the mosquitoes

were plaguing us almost to distraction, although we were in motion, and it astounded us that unclad humans could exist for two consecutive nights on such a spot. That they could live and grow old there, we thought nothing less than a miracle.

Daylight came, and we looked out on a cheerless world of grey skies and sleet-swept river and swamps. The noise that had aroused us before the dawn was the rumpus attendant on tying up at a little mission settlement called Shambe, where, there being somewhat more ground space available than at the other Sudd villages—there was a tiny esplanade, planted with shrubs, a miniature roadway, and two or three fair-sized thatched dwellings. The steamer cast off before we were out of bed, and another day through the interminable Sudd began. It continued dull and overcast, and rain fell throughout the day. A miserable progress was ours.

Shortly after lunch, on rounding one of the innumerable bends in the river, we saw another steamer approaching, the S.G.S. *Ferreri*. We swung round, and tied up to her, to allow her master to come aboard for some purpose or other. She had on board Mr. and Mrs. Coriad, the Commissioner of the Nua District, and his wife. We caught a glimpse of them, but they did not come out on deck.

Coriad is King of the Stork People, the Nua of the Sudd, but as nature has endowed neither him nor his lady with stork-like legs for wading around their domain, they must perforce live aboard their steamer, for in the eight months of the rainy season there is not sufficient dry land in the whole Sudd on which to build a home. Up and down the Nile they pass, landing at only two little village clearings on the river bank at intervals, guiding the destinies of Britain's strangest people, as best they can under the conditions, and passing their days in the worst mosquito-plagued, wettest, and most fever-stricken area on earth.

With the going down of the sun, when all the good

Moslems on our craft had set their mats towards Mecca, and were intoning their prayers, the mosquitoes came in droves—pulpy, poisonous, stinging little torturers—and when we finally turned in it was to endure a night of horror, for they found their way under our nets in dozens, and sleep came only in fitful periods throughout the long hours of darkness.

Our journey continued throughout the following day, and late into the night. We had turned in to get a few hours sleep when the steamer siren aroused us about 11.30 p.m. Leaping out of our stretchers we roused Umbashi, dressed in great haste, pulled down our nets and beds, and had completed our packing as the gang-plank was pushed ashore.

Our first glimpse of Tonga took in a small group of white-gowned natives, standing in the darkness by the swampy shore. We had heard that there was an Austrian Mission some distance from the river bank, and in the group we made out a black-gowned figure, whom we reckoned was one of the mission Fathers. We stepped ashore, and greeted him, and he agreed to find us accommodation for the night near the mission. He left us then to convey the tidings of our coming to the Father Superior, and we stayed to superintend the landing of our baggage. Mosquitoes descended on us in swarms, biting us almost to madness. Umbashi, as he laboured with the loads, was whimpering with the pain of the pests' onslaughts. There were countless millions of them, and the air buzzed with their singing.

The unloading of our baggage had not been more than half completed, when the engineer of the *Zafir* came ashore, and told us that a message from the Governor of the Upper Nile Province, stationed at Malakal, had just been delivered to him. It said that we were not to be allowed to land at Tonga in any circumstances, but must proceed on the steamer to Malakal, five hours' steaming down the river. It was a staggering blow to our plans. We had no wish to continue further in that barge, and moreover, Malakal

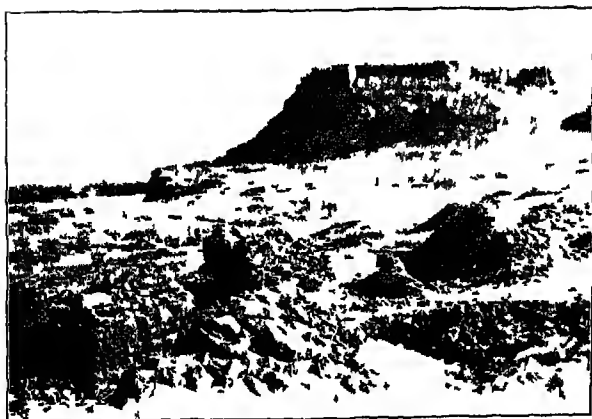
was on the opposite side of the Nile, and was not in communication by land with Khartoum. To proceed there would mean that we would have to continue on by steamer almost to Khartoum. From Tonga, on the other hand, we hoped to be able to get through the swamp to Talodi, and the Nuba Mountains district. From there we could proceed to El Obeid, and thence across the desert to Khartoum by land.

As we talked the matter over with the engineer the mosquitoes kept up their work of torture, and remaining still was little short of an ordeal. There was a single line of telephone between Tonga and Malakal, and we suggested to the engineer that we should remain at Tonga, taking the responsibility on ourselves, and advise the Governor at Malakal by telephone of our intentions, it being our conviction that he had misunderstood our original plans. The engineer readily assented to the proposal, and agreed to explain to the Governor at Malakal, on his arrival at that post, why we had left the boat. It was fortunate that two such outlandish places as Tonga and Malakal should be connected by telephone. It let us out of a very awkward situation, quite satisfactorily.

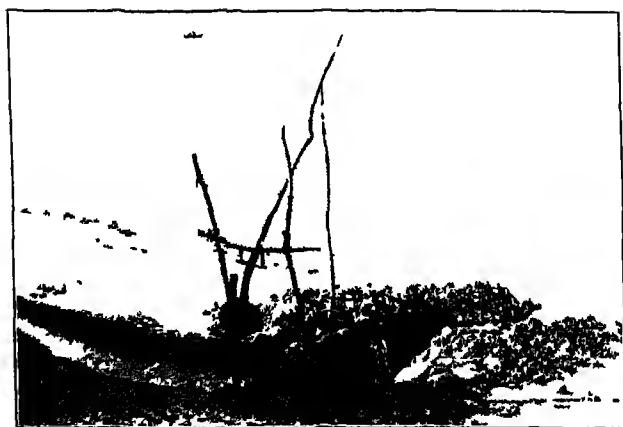
As the steamer got under way again, we took stock of our situation. Never in the whole course of our wanderings through Africa had we brought up in such a desolate spot. We had heard that there was a track from Tonga through the swamps, but we did not know if it was passable at that season. In the event of our being marooned there, we would have to stay a fortnight in the dreariest, most mosquito-infested swamp in Africa, as there was no steamer until then. It was nearly one o'clock in the morning, the darkness was intense, and our sufferings from the bites of the stinging myriads of mosquitoes, were exquisitely painful. The missionary had not returned, but we were unable to stand still any longer, so we got the natives to pick up our baggage, and we moved off in the direction in which we had seen the missioner go. We passed along a narrow muddy track



A Closer View of the Pictorial



The old Fortress of Kasr Ureem, Ancient Ruins and Broken
Tombs in the Foreground The Shellal-Halfa Reach



Lifting Water from the Nile for the Irrigation Plots above
the Shellal-Halfa Reach.



A Typical Scene on the Reach.

across a bog, and presently met the missionary returning with the Father Superior. We asked if we could obtain a place to sleep until the morning, and were told we could have the school-room.

We explained who we were, and said that we wished to get through to Talodi. The Reverend Father said it would be impossible to get there, as a khorr across the track was impassable, and only a few days before a party of merchants bound from Talodi to Tonga, who were bringing down goods on pack-oxen, had been turned back by the flooded swamps. They were depressing tidings, but our immediate concern was to get away from the mosquitoes. We were directed to the school-room, a large mud-walled structure, badly ventilated, and as hot as a furnace, even at that hour. We hurried inside, anxious to get our stretchers and nets erected. The natives followed, put down their loads, and then stood around, jabbering and obstructing our movements, until our patience exhausted, we suggested that the Holy One might tell his flock to depart. He explained that they were waiting for payment. We asked how much the obliging souls wanted, and were told 12 piastres each. We had had those loads carried over twenty miles daily for 18 piastres, and those christianised robbers had carried them fully 400 yards! We paid, and kicked them out.

When we had our nets up, we tried to get under them without letting the mosquitoes in, but they thwarted us, and came under with us in buzzing, blood-lusting swarms. We undressed under our nets with the voracious pests making the most of their opportunities while we were helpless to defend ourselves. The exertion of pulling off our clothes in the stifling atmosphere of that confined space, had us in a lather of perspiration, and for long hours we lay staring into the darkness with sleep-heavy eyes, but unable to sleep because of the tortures we suffered. Umbashi, rolled up in his silk tent, was slapping himself vigorously, and groaning like a soul in torment. Jim and I banged at the blood-

gorged fiends that preyed on us, for hour after hour, finally despairing of sleep, and praying for daylight. It came at length, ending our worst night in Africa. It was the anniversary of the day I had started out from Capetown.

By the light that filtered through the narrow window-spaces of our dismal bed-chamber, we could see the mosquitoes still buzzing around our nets, and making frantic endeavours to get in. Our hands and faces were streaked with blood, and we were covered with lumps, and aching all over. Before rising we entertained ourselves by entrapping the mosquitoes that had got under our nets in the folds of the netting, and squeezing our blood out of them. We discovered that the pastime had one drawback. No sooner did our fingers touch the nets than a dozen or so of the excluded insects settled on them, and drove their rapier-like lancets into the flesh in a twinkling. To discover just how anxious they were to devour us, we held our hands about a quarter of an inch from the netting. Instantly swarms of the pests settled on the nets, and we could see their suckers coming through stretched to the utmost to reach our flesh. We had stumbled on the most fascinating of all pastimes for African travellers—tantalizing the mosquitoes. How the thwarted little brutes performed. They seemed to become almost frenzied, pushing each other aside in a mad hurry and scurry to obtain a more advantageous position from which to reach after the feast. To advance our finger a hair-breadth nearer to those darting needles, was to set up a riot amongst them. Blood covetous fiends twisted and turned, shot a proboscis in here and there, failed to reach the feast by the barest of margins, withdrew with lightning-like rapidity, to try another cast through the mesh, fearful that the succulent morsel should be withdrawn ere they had tasted it. It was sheer delight to lie and watch those instruments of torture darting in through the net, secure in the knowledge that you were master of the situation. When they were completely baffled, and thoroughly

maddened, we would end the comedy by bringing up the other hand stealthily and entrapping the lot of them. Revenge was very, very sweet!

We could not lie abed all day, however, and the mosquitoes had their turn again, while we were performing our ablutions with the aid of a sponge and a pot of Nile water. It was a painful operation, but cleanliness like its associated virtue, calls for martyrs, and we made the sacrifice with as good a grace as possible though we wasted no time over the rite.

Breakfast was the next consideration. Umbashi cast about, and, having discovered a supply of fuel and water, built a fire in an ante-room attached to the school, and soon had porridge and tea ready for us. With the rising of the sun, clouds of flies had thronged in to reinforce the mosquitoes, and our cup of woe was filled to overflowing. Pestered and tortured throughout the repast, breakfast was not the usual welcome meal, and we were glad when it was over.

We next repaired to the telephone hut and made the Arab in charge understand that we wanted to get through to Malakal. After several hours he managed to get in touch with the Governor there, and as we had expected, learned that that gentleman had misunderstood the route we intended taking. Having learned of our intention to proceed via Talodi, he informed us that we would have to await permission to travel that way, as some of the country was a closed area, and that he would advise us when he received instructions by telegraph, from Khartoum. Meanwhile we settled down to wait, and to discover some means of getting through the swamps separating us from Talodi.

The leisure our enforced idleness gave us, we were quite unable to enjoy in that unattractive spot. It was stiflingly hot, the air was heavy with vile stench, flies swarmed in thousands, mosquitoes attacked even in the heat of the day, and the only dry land was in the immediate vicinity of the mission.

We strolled from the mission along a narrow path through the deep grass to Tonga village, and wandered for a while among the large collection of small rectangular, thatch-roofed dwellings of grey mud. The local savages, the Shalluk—a semi-nude, idle crowd—live there alongside natives of various Sudanese tribes, some with a strong Arab strain in them.

When we approached the Father Superior about our chances of getting transport from Tonga, he replied that we had no chance of getting porters, as the Shalluks never did any work of that nature. When the water covering the surrounding countryside had receded somewhat, we would probably be able to get ox-transport sent down from Talodi, but he could not hold out any hope of the beasts being able to get through to Tonga until the end of November, when the rain ceased. It was then September 8. We asked how people ever got out of the place. He said he had been on the spot for twenty-five years himself, and had never wandered more than a few miles from the mission. The German Prince Lichtenstein had been the last visitor to the mission. He had been lion shooting at the neighbouring khorr, and had got back to Talodi, but that was before the rain set in, sometime about March. Visions of a protracted stay in Tonga began to float like awful phantoms before our eyes. Later in the day the Father gave us the cheering item of information that one of his obliging flock was willing to try and wade through the mud with us as far as the reputedly-impassable khorr, in return for two head of cattle. We declined the offer, explaining we had no cattle attached to our *safari*.

About 4 p.m. that day, when we were gloomily anticipating the horrors of another night among the mosquitoes, the Father came again and mentioned casually that we perhaps might like to sleep in the Government rest-hut, instead of the school-room. We did not know there was a Government rest-hut at Tonga, but we

said it did not matter, as we would probably be eaten alive in any case. He said he thought there was a mosquito-proof house attached to it. A mosquito-proof house!—and we had spent one night of horror in an open school-room. We gathered up our beds, blankets, and nets, and asked him to lead us to it. We found it buried amongst the deep grass, just beyond the village. The hut was old and far too stuffy to use, but there were two mosquito-proof houses attached to it, one of them in excellent repair. In it we took up our abode, and as a second line of defence erected our nets over our stretchers. We retired early, and spent a tolerable night although the chorus of frustrated mosquitoes outside the gauze shelter was like the surging of the surf on a rugged coast. A few dozen got into the room somehow or other, and some got under the nets, but we despatched them, and had it not been for the fleas, the steaming heat, the screeching of a couple of owls under the rafters of the hut, and the commotion made by a family of kites in the vicinity, we would have slept well. As it was, the night was spent pleasantly, contrasted with the agony of the previous one.

Next day we located a heavy trolley, and decided that as soon as the message from Khartoum came through, via Malakal, we would load our baggage on to it, and if no offers of assistance were forthcoming, the three of us would endeavour to drag it as far as the khorr. A small, canoe-shaped bundle of pith poles, that we noticed down by the river, we commandeered, deciding to utilise it to carry our loads across the khorr. Then, having nothing better to do, we spent the day in one of three Arab dhows tied up to the river bank, lying sprawled out on the bags of grain in the bottom of the massive hull, sheltered from the sun by the craft's huge arched covering of plaited grass and reeds, watching the huge fish jumping out of the water, the small islands of papyrus floating down with the current, and an occasional dug-out sliding past with its lone

occupant, a painted Shalluk, or a naked Nua from the marshes. An idle, profitless day.

As we sat disconsolate over our supper that night, the Father Superior came to us with the head-man of the Arabic-Shalluk-Nua community. The Father said that the head-man had a suggestion to make. We did not like the look of the fellow. He was a half-Arab, half-Shalluk, had an insolent, furtive expression on his unhandsome face, and assumed an irritating air of self-assurance that had nettled us on the few occasions he had tried to talk with us. Once a boy from the village had approached us, with, as we had thought, an offer of his services, but had gone off again, after the head-man had harangued him in our hearing. We suspected at the time that the fellow was taking advantage of our ignorance of the Shalluk dialect, to place obstacles in the way of our obtaining porters. However, we were ready to grasp at any straw, and asked the missionary to let the fellow speak. With much gesture, and a good deal of verbiage, he communicated his scheme to our interpreter. Briefly, it was this.

'The khor which lay between us and Talodi, he said, flowed into the Nile a little higher up than the mission. He would arrange to have our baggage taken up it by canoe, to the point where the track from Tonga to Talodi crossed it. We could plough through the mud to the khor on our own, and await the arrival of the baggage. The remainder of the stage to Talodi we would have to arrange for ourselves. It seemed a way out of the worst of our difficulties that had not presented itself to us, as we had not known that the khor joined the Nile in the vicinity. We suspected however that there was a catch somewhere. There was. The fellow calmly demanded payment at the rate of £5 a day for the services of himself, his canoes, and his men. We consigned him to the nether regions, and left him, but his visit had advised us of one useful item of knowledge, namely that the khor provided a possible means of escape from our exile.

We spoke that evening to the Father about the

possibilities of obtaining canoes. He expressed himself as being very pessimistic, but eventually summoned a couple of piccanins, and sent them off to a village higher up the Nile to inquire about some. They had not returned before nightfall.

The mosquitoes that night drove us nearly insane. They found their way into our mosquito-house, got into our nets, and tortured us almost beyond endurance. Round about the mosquito-house they swarmed in millions, and the high-pitched hum they made, produced a volume of sound we could scarcely believe was made by such small insects.

Somewhere about dawn, as far as I remember, I dozed, or it might be that I fainted from loss of blood. Anyhow I must have lost consciousness, and when Jim aroused me it was broad daylight, and I found I was still mechanically slapping at the mosquitoes. Both our nets, our blankets, and our faces appeared like shambles, and tiny corpses littered our stretchers. We reckoned we could hang on to our sanity in that spot just one day more.

The air was still black with the pests when we turned out, to take our sponge bath, though we put off the event as long as we could. Dusky observers watching us cleaning our teeth appeared to be amused at our gyrations, but we did not even smile at each other. Our sufferings were too exquisite. We will draw a veil over the bath-scene that followed. It was altogether too painful. Dressed at length, we went across to the mission, and as we had anticipated, the tidings were the worst. All the canoes, we were told, were away in the swamps with the natives, who were hunting hippopotami. The Father conveyed another cheering item of information for us to brood over. A number of natives who had been living in the swamps in the region of the khorr had somehow or other found their way into the mission over night, having been flooded out, when the khorr rose several feet. We could have groaned in the heaviness of our spirits.

The long awaited message from Malakal came through that day, via Talodi by telephone. The District Commissioner there informed us that a message from Khartoum had come through to him, and we were to be allowed to proceed via Talodi and El Obeid. We told him of the state of the countryside, and of our difficulties regarding transport. He said that the khorr was quite a practicable route, and twenty to twenty-five piastres —(4s.2d. to 5s. 3d.) was a fair price to pay for a felucca, or small canoe. We explained the difficulty we had had in attempting to hire a felucca. He said that when we left the line, he would give a message to the Arab in charge of the telephone, to take to Ebreheim Abdullah, the chief of the Tonga community, ordering him to have us put on our way at once. He said that he would also get a telephone message through to Eliri, between Tonga and Talodi, for us, instructing Arabs there to bring ox-transport down to the khorr, to our projected point of disembarkation, to collect our baggage. We thanked him from the bottom of our hearts, and left that telephone-box feeling like condemned men reprieved.

Later in the afternoon we met Abdullah, a much more pleasant type of Arab than the good-for-nothing interloper who had made such outrageous demands on us, and surely enough, he had received the message from Malakal. He informed us that we could have two feluccas for fifty piastres (10s.6d.) each. Eventually we managed to hire three for £1 (Egyptian). We completed our packing, and were told the canoes would be ready "when the kites started cawing"—which meant daybreak, although our experience had been that the feathered disturbers of our peace began their racket long hours before dawn. We were to proceed as far as a Shalluk village on the banks of the khorr, on the morrow, and, the following day, continue to our destination. The arrangement meant that we would have to travel on into the night of the second day, but as it was reported that the whole country was about six feet under water, there appeared to be no place

between the village and our landing point where we could camp.

As we had half expected, the feluccas did not show up until 10 a.m. We had everything in readiness for departure, but one of the boats still failed to put in an appearance. An hour passed, and then the boys who had arrived asked for the money for their rations. We paid it over, and settled down to loaf. We knew African natives. At the end of another half-hour we sought out one of the police boys stationed at Tonga, and learned from him that the men who had received the ration-money had gone off to their village up the river, and would not be back till about 4 p.m. That is the African idea of a start at dawn.

We sent the police boy off, and told him that if the canoes were not down at the river landing by 2 p.m., there would be trouble. He indicated that he understood, drew his hand across his throat meaningly, and went about our business. They arrived at one o'clock.

Three long, narrow, dug-out canoes, barely wide enough to sit in, and each leaking in several places, were drawn up in the shallow water by the river's edge, and our baggage was loaded into two of them. The third was our conveyance. Like the others, it was of the rudest construction. Two logs had been roughly hollowed out, and joined end on by means of twine lashings, passed through holes bored in each section. The lashing merely kept the two sections together, and the break was reinforced by bundles of twigs bent into a semi-circle around the join, and plastered with mud. The frail craft curved up from the water-line at each end, was about eighteen inches deep, sixteen inches wide, and thirty feet long. None of the craft had any fittings or ornamentation of any kind, but were well suited to the work of travelling through flooded reeds and grass, and up the khorrs and backwaters of the great river.

Stepping very gingerly, Jim and I managed to board our craft without upsetting it, and squeezed into a

sitting posture in the fore-end. The naked canoe-men—tall, lithe fellows—took their places in the bow of each dug-out, paddles were dipped, and we set off up the Nile, from the most miserable spot it had ever been our misfortune to be stranded in.

For some miles we headed against the current, the strong steady strokes of the single paddle, wielded by our boatmen, sending us along at a good rate. Cramped as were our positions, the easy motion of the canoe gliding up the broad stream, was quite enjoyable, but when, after a few miles, we turned into the reeds, and poles replaced paddles, we experienced in full measure the discomforts of such a mode of travel. At every heave on the long pole wielded by our boatman, the craft tilted sharply, and as the canoe was riding with but a few inches of free-board, we frequently shipped quite a quantity of water. We had to bail then, but could not save ourselves the discomfort of sitting in pools of muddy water. Worse still was the terrific heat.

Out on the open river, the glare of the sun full on our backs had been bad enough, but we occasionally caught a suggestion of a cooling breeze. Among the reeds it was suffocating.

The heat and glare of afternoon gave place to the coolness of approaching dusk. Troubles, we knew, would come swiftly with the going down of the sun, but for the moment we put them from mind. The deep rumble of distant thunder and the forked flash of lightning warned us that rain would be upon us before long, and great banks of clouds were even then massing to the north-west and commencing to drift down across our airy palaces.

Fortunately we had reached the village, and we landed near a straggling line of grass huts, edging the khorr. We managed to persuade the bedaubed naked villagers to come out of their huts, and assist in bringing our baggage up to a clear space in the village. Rain was beginning to fall in large drops, and we made a Trojan effort to complete our camping arrangements,

before all our baggage got thoroughly soaked. The sun disappeared, a mighty wind rose up, a deafening clap of thunder split the heavens, and the rain came down in torrents, flooding us out in a very few moments.

Not even mosquito-infested Tonga could compare with that landing-place in the swamp as a malaria plague-spot. When the rain ceased falling mosquitoes came out in countless millions. We dived under our nets, and had Umbashi bring us a hurricane lamp, so that we could see and despatch those that had followed us under. By its light we could see the buzzing hordes. The walls of our tent, the outer surfaces of the nets, and the air, were black with them. They came surging into the tent in vast clouds, and the singing they set up made our flesh tingle. The Sudd country must, without exception, be the vilest plague spot on earth.

We bathed in the open air next morning, to the intense astonishment of the assembled populace, who, obviously, had never washed in their lives, and then sat down among the mud and flies to breakfast. As we would be without food for the remainder of the day, we decided to make the most of that meal. Unfortunately the meat which Umbashi had brought from Tonga was hippo flesh, and we were compelled to cast it away after vainly endeavouring to masticate it. To our disgust, a very dirty, fly infested piccanin retrieved it from the mud, and wolfed it. He then sat on his haunches like an expectant dog, watching us eat, and waiting for more cast away tit-bits. All the natives of those swamps live like animals. Mosquitoes and flies torment them by night and day. They live most of their lives in water. Fish, and the little native grain they can grow alongside their huts, comprise their food supply. They have not even a waist-girdle to protect them from the insect pests. They are plagued with malaria, and in those hot humid swamps it is a wonder that any of them survive at all. In spite of everything, however, many of the men-folk are of fine stature, and appear strong enough. They are not virile however, and regard

the most trivial task as a labour. The Shalluk women are miserable slatterns—very poor types indeed. They all appear contented enough, despite the hard conditions of their life. They have come little in contact with civilization, make no use of European goods whatever, and are not recruited for any kind of work by Europeans.

We left the open water again shortly after starting, and for the next ten hours we were poled through steaming swamps where insect pests swarmed over us, and where the air was always stifling. Progress was slow, and the utter monotony of the tall grass and weeds, that shut out everything else from our view, made each hour seem an age.

That day we pushed for thirty miles through the flooded swamps in the region of the Lake No area of the Bahr-el-Ghazal-Upper-Nile junction, following roughly the reed-grown course of the Ragaba khorr, and never once did we see anything that looked like firm ground. It was not necessary to keep to the khorr proper, as the water was from five to six feet deep across the surrounding countryside, and more often than not the boatmen, guided by an uncanny sense of direction, pushed straight ahead through the reeds and only picked up the khorr at intervals.

That night we came on three huts set down on a few square yards of boggy mud in the centre of the waste. Some half-dozen Shalluk, with two of their womenfolk, were squatting in the slimy ooze about a small smoky fire near one of the huts, cleaning fish. The whole clearing was not above six yards square, and was set about with pools of slimy black water and mud, and hemmed in by the reeds. Once there had been a Mtama field around the huts but that was flooded deeply, and had been long since. The stranded natives had nothing but fish to live on, and the indications were, that if the water rose another few inches, even their huts would be flooded out, but they appeared to be unconcerned at their plight. Probably they had companions with canoes, who were

away fishing, and who would rescue them if the waters rose any higher. We got straight under our nets with our clothes on, had our supper in those refuges, and undressed there, in an effort to avoid the mosquitoes. We were only partly successful, and spent a further vile night.

We landed (in the water) the next day, at a point which, the boatmen said, was our destination. As far as we could see there was nothing to indicate it. The water, however, was shallower than over the country which we had passed, and, after wading through it some distance, we found a clearing in the grass a little above water level. We had our baggage brought up from the canoes, paid off the boys, and sat down to wait for our ox-transport. They did not come that day, and we spent another miserable night in the swamp, being flooded out by rain, and tormented by clouds of anopheles.

The next morning Jim and I filled two packs, and set off to walk to Eliri, leaving Umbashi in charge of our baggage. After walking knee-deep in water for four miles, we saw real forest trees ahead of us, and, a little later, to our unspeakable relief, came on a group of natives sitting beneath one of the trees eating their morning meal. There were three oxen grazing nearby, and we managed, with the aid of the smattering of Arabic we had picked up, to ascertain that they comprised the party that had been sent down to take our baggage. The foolish fellows had arrived at the spot on the previous day, but had not proceeded to the khorr, trusting that we would land from our canoes near where they had halted. We sent them back for our baggage, and sat down on comparatively dry land—the first we had seen for weeks—to await their return.

It was early in the afternoon when they came with our baggage loaded up on the bulls, and with the grinning Umbashi in their wake. It seemed as if we were to leave the Sudd behind at long last.

CHAPTER XX

THE BULLS OF KORDOFAN

BULL TRANSPORT—NEMTTI—AN ARAB REBEL—UMBASHI ON TREK—
HEAVY GOING—TALODI—NUDE BEAUTIES—UMBASHI DISPLAYS RE-
SOURCE—A LITTLE MISTAKE—KADUGLI—A MECCA PILGRIMAGE—
DILLING—BAGGARA ARABS—TREASURE IN THE DESERT—EL OBEID

WITH THE coming of the bulls, we were introduced to an entirely new form of transport.

The animals were large, heavy beasts, a trifle slow, but undoubtedly the only form of transport for that swampy region. Mud and yielding slush did not appear to present any impediment to their progress, and we found that they would go through places which would block any other type of transport we had known.

The loads were not strapped on them, but were merely balanced on their backs. Until the riders had mounted on top of the baggage, there was always the imminent danger that the whole of our belongings would be precipitated into the mud by the slightest movement of the beasts. When, however, the Arab in charge of each animal had mounted, by the process of inducing the bull to lower its head, so that one foot could be placed between the horns, and then stepping along its neck, and so on to the top of the load, the danger was more or less past. Despite their skill in balancing loads on the backs of swaying beasts, however, mishaps did occur rather more frequently than were desirable, and much time was lost in repacking. We early had an indication of the troubles that we would experience with bull-transport. We had gone only fifty yards on our way toward Eliri, when one of the loads and a rider came off with a crash, and there

was a horrible mix-up for about five minutes. Fortunately nothing was damaged, and a quarter of an hour later we got properly started.

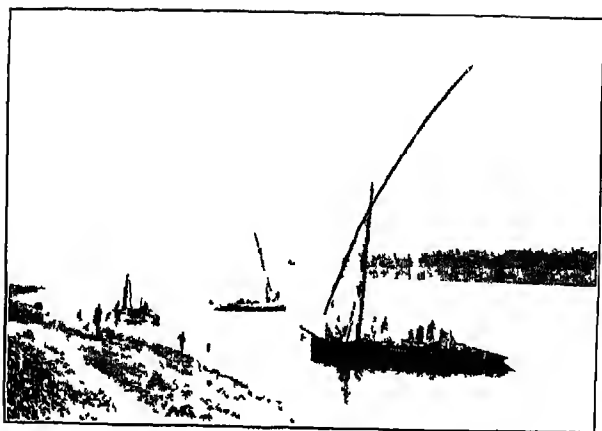
We covered only three miles further that day, when the leader of the caravan, an agreeable, efficient Sudanese, announced that it was necessary to camp for the night, as we were about to enter water once more, and we would not get through it until long after the mosquito myriads had started their nightly onslaught. The reference to the mosquitoes settled it, and we decided to stop. There was a cleared space by the roadside—obviously an old native camping site—and there we ran up our tent, and soon had camp arranged for the night. Umbashi gladdened our hearts by serving up freshly-baked bread that evening. Always bread seemed to us the most acceptable of all food.

The going next day was unpleasant, as most of the track was under water, and there was no escape from the great heat. Trees now appeared in greater numbers, and the teen, or black cotton-soil, was giving way to sand and loam, but grass, eight and ten feet in height still walled us in, and circumscribed our view. Our only thought after covering the first few miles through that country was to cover our daily distance, and gain a cool resting-place, where we could satisfy the pangs of hunger and thirst, and rest a while out of the sun.

Hungry, tired, wet, and yet perspiring freely, we reached a tumble-down rest hut set in the deep grass at the base of a lofty pile of mighty granite boulders—the first boulders we had seen for many a day—at the end of the second day's march. A cursory inspection of the hut showed that it was too tumble-down to be habitable, as the thatch was very old, and fine dust from it filtered down in steady showers. We put up our beds out in the open, erected our nets, and turned in—but not to sleep. The night was sultry, we were smarting from scores of mosquito bites, and presently we began to burn and itch all over. Our heads and bodies appeared of a sudden to become affected by

some intense irritant, and the more we rubbed the affected parts, the more unbearable became the itching. For hour after hour we tossed, and turned, and cursed. About midnight I reached the conclusion that the cause of the trouble was the fine dust filtering down on us from the thatch of the neighbouring rest-hut. As the mosquitoes were buzzing in millions outside the nets, I would not brave their attacks by getting up to change my situation, but compromised by turning round and placing my head at the end of the stretcher clear of the thatch. The net rested on my face, and the mosquitoes made the most of their opportunity. I reached out, and dragged in a stool to prop up the net, and lay thus for the next hour or two with the stool sticking into the back of my neck. It all served no purpose however, and 2 a.m. found us both in a sorrier plight than ever. We were in a lather of perspiration and burning with the irritation from head to foot. Finally we could bear the annoyance no longer. We turned out, heated some water on the fire, and soaped and scrubbed ourselves vigorously. We then soused ourselves with cold water, and turned in once more. We got an hour's sleep after that, but the recurrence of the itching awoke us both about 4 a.m., and neither of us slept again that morning. It was a night of horror.

With the morning light, our spirits rose somewhat, as our concern was to get as far from that spot as we could. We were still itching, and we noticed that the boys were similarly affected, and that the oxen too appeared to be troubled. The boys lighted grass fires beneath each beast, and smoked them while they were being loaded. Far from resenting the treatment, the animals appeared to appreciate it, and kept in the smoke as well as they were able. We sought an explanation of the visitation from Umbashi, and that worthy pointed to clouds of minute aphid-like insects, that hovered about us. They were like tiny bits of white fluff, and too small to see when entrapped in



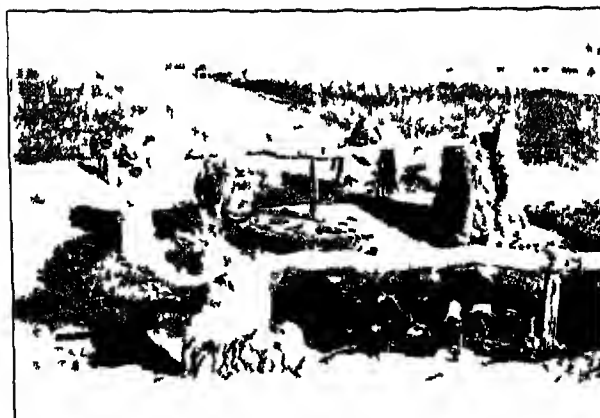
A Scene on the Nile: Shellal-Halfa Reach.



Bashful Watercarriers: North of Aswan



Carvings on an inverted Block in Mahamid



Camels and Oxen at the Waterwheel and Ploughing

the hand. Umbashi said that they were called Nemitti, and were "mbeya sana" (very bad). We agreed with him entirely. He explained that they rose from swamps when the water had subsided.

As we were preparing to leave the vile spot, a native from a nearby village presented us with a very begrimed register of people who had used the hut in the past, asked us to sign it, and pay his fee of 5 piastres a head. That was the last straw. In the first place we had not used the hut, and in the second the surroundings were unfit for beasts to be stabled in. We read a note printed on the front cover of the book, and signed by an official, to the effect that the hut was the native's only means of livelihood, and asking visitors to pay the amount asked. We were astonished to see quite a lengthy register of names in the book, and marvelled that anyone could have agreed to such an arrangement. We did not pay, and we learned later that the hut was condemned, and that the book was an old, out-of-date one, that had been in use at an entirely different spot. Sudanese natives appear to have more guile than their southern brothers.

At the end of that day we sighted the first of the jebels, or hills, of the Nuba Mountain district, and after a march through the heat of one of the hottest days we had experienced for many months, we reached Eliri village, at its foot. A picturesque looking Arab mounted on a magnificent Arab stallion, and carrying a broad-bladed spear on his shoulder, rode towards us, as we approached the village. In his wake rode a retinue of three or four followers, dressed in the long white, flowing robes worn in those parts. The leader of the band looked a rather ferocious fellow, but when he drew level with us he slid from the saddle, saluted courteously, mounted, and rode on. Next came two bearded merchants, carrying modern rifles, and sitting astride donkeys that appeared far too small to bear their weight. Each carried a white sunshade to protect him from the sun. They, too, dismounted

and salaamed. On a little further, and a great ungainly camel, with two ebony coloured Nuba youths riding astride of it, came trotting down the track. More riders, and a few wayfarers on foot, we passed several of them armed with rifles of varied ancient and modern patterns—and then came to a large clearing, in which the greatest number of horses we had seen in all Africa, were tethered. They were all fine Arab thoroughbreds, and a goodly sight to look upon. Crossing a shallow running stream that issued from a gorge in the jebel, we passed the first huts, and received the salutes of a great concourse of Eliri Arabs, gathered under a tree before a small building, that was apparently a kind of district office. A turbaned native police boy came to meet us, and conducted us to a rest hut in the village.

Wishing to get in touch with the District Commissioner at Talodi before the telephone closed down, I made my way to the office, before which we had seen the Arabs standing, and they fell back to let me pass. Inside the hot little room about a score of bearded, white-robed fellows were gathered around a table, at which was seated the Mamur, or native official of the district. He was very courteous and obliging, and tried to make the connection for me. While I was waiting, I had an opportunity to study the gathering. They were a strong-faced, keen-eyed band, but they were ebony black in colour, and little like true Arabs. We learned later that the population of the Nuba Mountains District was composed of roughly 60% Nubas, the Abantu people of the district, and that the remaining 40% were Talodi, or Eliri Arabs.

I eventually succeeded in raising Talodi, and learned that Mr. Oakley, the District Commissioner, with whom I was endeavouring to get in touch, was at Eliri, having come down three days previously. He was in fact at that moment lying ill with malaria in a rest hut alongside the office in which I was standing. Perhaps it was our knowledge of Arabic that was at

fault, but it did seem stupid that we had to send a long distance call to get that item of information.

Oakley left his bed that afternoon, and we dined with him in the evening. He told us that he had come down on a tax-collecting *safari*, and said that on the following day he intended proceeding to the summit of the jebel where the recalcitrant old Arab had taken his stand, and collecting his taxes, despite the threats that had been uttered. He added that he would probably burn the old fellow's village, and expected that that would put an end to his resistance. Regarding our own business, he said that we could take our bulls on to Talodi, and that he would ring through to his Number 2, who was also down with malaria, by the way, to have fresh transport awaiting us.

A great deal of the Nuba Mountains Province, he informed us, was fever-ridden. Eliri was a particularly unhealthy spot. When the Nuba Mountains district was a province on its own, and not, as now, a portion of the Kordofan Province, a military force had been quartered at Eliri, and the death roll from malaria and black-water fever had been particularly high.

We left it next day on the forty miles' stretch to Talodi, at a leisurely pace, as the heat was terrific, and the bulls had slowed down considerably.

Umbashi marches off after the last of the *safari* has started. In these days he has his troubles. He does not like the steamy heat and the mosquitoes, any more than we do, for although his own home lies in the swamps of the Congo Basin, his sojourns in the deserts have introduced to him country where such discomforts do not exist. He can however always manage a cheerful grin, even when things are at their worst, and seems resigned to the fact that Cairo is "mbare sana" (very far away). He keeps his bwanas fed, suffers their little foibles, talks much, regardless of whether he is understood or not by the natives he addresses, and has given up in disgust all attempts to learn the outlandish Arabic tongue.

We passed through Abu Faïda and Abu Gore, walking through mud and slush for two days, and on the evening of the second found ourselves about ten miles from Talodi. Black clouds were massing overhead, and when the lightning flashed and showed them up we knew that we were in for a thorough soaking before we made our destination. Thunder rolled from two distinct storm centres, and repeated reverberations warned us that one was moving towards us. We could see the rain falling in the jebels ahead, and just as we reached the worst stretch of the track in the whole of the eighty odd miles between the Ragaba Khor and Talodi, the storm struck us. We were plodding along knee-deep in mud, and soon water began to flood in from the surrounding grass, and sweeping through the mud around us. At times the flood waters swept to our waists, and we had the greatest difficulty in struggling along. Our water-filled boots slipped and dragged, and we found pushing against the water fearfully tiring work. The night was pitch dark, and to add to our troubles, we were hard put to it to keep on the track. Never were we more thankful to see the gleam of lights than we were at the end of that horrible march. The bulls we had left miles behind us, we had no change of clothing with us, and we were chilled to the bone. Crossing an open stretch of ground, we finally entered a brightly-lighted bazaar, where seven foreigners—Greeks, Syrians, and half-caste natives were gathered yarning and smoking. Our sudden appearance out of the rain and darkness, wet and mud-covered, startled them considerably, and it was some time before they were calm enough to be questioned. Finally we made ourselves understood, and they conducted us to the house of Mr. Arbuthnot, the Assistant District Commissioner. With him we found Major George, the Officer in charge of the local half-company of the Sudan Camel Corps, and a Mr. Whitfield, the Agricultural Officer. They were a decent cheery company, and it felt good to be amongst

our fellows once more, although sitting in wet clothes and mud-caked boots, with a threat of malaria hanging over us, dampened our pleasure somewhat.

We dined with Arbuthnot, and while the meal was in progress a sudden crash without advised us that our bulls had arrived, and shot their loads into the mud. Hot baths were awaiting us, and although our blankets, pyjamas and clothing were soaked—the loads having fallen into the water several times—we revelled in the glorious luxury of the bath, and made what preparations we could for a comfortable night by hanging our things out before a large fire to dry. We were moderately successful, and although we slept in rather damp beds that night, our experiences had so inured us to such discomforts that we thought little of it.

Talodi, situated at the base of the Talodi jebel, is the administrative headquarters of the Southern Jebels District of the Kordofan Province. When the Nuba Mountains formed a separate province of the Sudan, as it did until a year previously, Talodi was the seat of the Governor of the Province. In addition to Arbuthnot, George and Whitfield, Talodi's British community consists of a doctor and the manager of a local cotton ginnery. The place is important only as an administrative centre, as its cotton-growing industry is on a relatively small scale, compared with such as the Sennar, or Gezirah, scheme, on the Blue Nile, for instance.

A sundowner party, at which we met Dr. Pratt and which was attended by the other residents of Talodi, filled in a joyous little evening. Before retiring that night I had Umbashi remove one of those most irritating of afflictions—a jigger flea's bag of eggs—from under one of my toes. The jigger flea is a vile pest. He bores down between the nail and the toe, or under the toe joints, and deposits a tiny bag of eggs, smaller than a pin's head, in the flesh. The afflicted one is never aware that the pest has been busy, until

some time later, when the pain around the affected member becomes excruciating. If the trouble is not attended to at once there is a danger that the eggs will be hatched, and the young fleas will bore further into the flesh, and cause all manner of complications.

Next day we were up before 5 a.m., but the men with the oxen were even earlier. Three Talodi Arabs were squatting outside the door waiting patiently for us to appear, and three poor-looking bulls were grazing nearby.

An hour slipped away before our bundles were ready to be handed over to them, and all the time they sat like carved images in the same spot. Then when all else was ready, they found they had no rope, and off they went to get it. Another half-hour passed before they returned. By the time the bulls were ready, it was quite late and Arbuthnot invited us to join him at breakfast. We sent the bulls on ahead, and as we knew we would have no difficulty in overtaking them, spent a portion of the morning inspecting the Merkaz, or Administrative offices. Never had we seen so much saluting and salaaming as we did at the Merkaz that morning. As we approached the office, a group of native police fell in at the slope, bugle calls rang out, and rifles came down to the "Present", bayonets flashing in the morning sun. An N.C.O. saluted, and following a brief inspection of the guard by Arbuthnot, every man of them saluted. Within the office there was the same show of deference to constituted authority. A boy brought in papers, sprang to attention, saluted, handed them over, and saluted once more. A pencil was called for. More salutes. The pencil was not satisfactory. The boy saluted, got another, extended his hand and took the rejected one, saluted again, and then handed over a fresh one, saluted and withdrew. Arbuthnot told us how readily his subjects took to the military ceremonial, and how impressed they were by a show of power and might.

Our transport had preceded us by nearly two hours when we set off around the end of the Talodi jebel, and turning to the west passed between the jebel and the Moro Hills, Kadugli bound. The road for a while was fairly good, the jebels looked fine, with the wealth of greenery covering their rock-strewn slopes, and walking would have been quite pleasant, had it not been for the great heat. What enjoyment we had in the walk was rudely dispelled, however, after the lapse of an hour, when we came up with our baggage train. It was crawling along at under two miles an hour. We had had, on occasion, slow means of transport before, but never anything so lamentably slow as those bulls. The animal were tsetse-bitten, lean, and covered with sores, and no persuasion would induce them to go faster. We came to a belt of soft mud a little further on, and laboured through it, sinking to our knees in places. Sometimes we had to assist each other out of morasses into which we floundered, so sticky was the mud. We rapidly out-distanced the bulls, and we knew that our progress to Kadugli, and as far beyond as El Obeid, would prove a slow and tiresome journey.

The terrific heat, however, soon put everything else out of our minds but visions of cool places, and shaded pools of clear water. In those days we learned what tropical heat really was. Until about 4 o'clock in the afternoon the sun's rays were unbearably hot, and the moisture sucked up from the flooded countryside rendered the atmosphere extremely humid. Almost invariably, thunderstorms broke late in the afternoon, and rain pelted down until well on into the night. We were alternately frizzling and shivering, and we had to walk twelve and thirteen hours a day to get in a bare seventeen or eighteen miles, so painfully slow were our pack-animals. Early in the march it appeared likely that our progress was to be blocked altogether. A khorr had flooded its banks and was sweeping across the track in a torrent nearly half-a-

mile wide. There were three distinct streams of water tearing across in front of us, with a morass of liquid mud between. Below the water the black mud was like glue, and a party of natives, coming from the Kadugli side with their pack-donkeys, were floundering about in the centre of it when we reached the spot. The men were carrying the loads, and the donkeys were attempting to struggle through slush that came up over their backs. On our side of the bog there were three other bulls, waiting to attempt the passage. One of them was ridden by a mere slip of an Arab girl, but when the feat of crossing the slime was essayed, we noticed that she performed the extraordinarily difficult task of balancing the load on the back of her heaving, floundering mount, as well as any. We later discovered that most of the bulls in that portion of the country were in charge of young Arab girls, and nearly all the recruits we travelled with later were comely young Arab maidens, who did their work as efficiently as any man.

The passage of that bog took us several hours, but once again the bulls proved their usefulness under such conditions, and we got our loads across without any untoward mishap. The going gradually improved after that, and Jim and I left the bulls, and went on ahead at a pace that was more calculated to keep us from falling asleep.

Approaching a village half-hidden among the boulders and groves some distance up the slope of one of the jebels, we were confronted suddenly by a large band of Nubas, who emerged from the deep grass, and lined the side of the track as we went by. They were magnificent types. The men, whose heights averaged about 6 feet 2 inches, and whose gleaming naked bodies rippled with muscle and sinew, looked warriors every inch, with their great broad-bladed spears, their simple but impressive head ornaments of waving plumes, and general mein of fearlessness. Their women-folk were unique in this,

that they, of all the Abantu women we had seen in the whole course of our travels, were the only ones who went abroad as unclothed as the original Eve. Not a stitch, a girdle, nor a string of beads did they wear, for sweet Modesty's sake, and they showed not the slightest trace of embarrassment either. There were Aphrodites among them, too—Paris would have had something to think about in such a company.

Gazing on divinity disrobed must have blinded us to more mundane objects, for shortly after leaving the dusky company, Jim and I lost the track. Jim was some distance ahead of me, when I saw three Nubas coming through the grass towards him. They stopped and remained rigid until he had gone past, then warily stepped out and followed behind him. Two of them were armed with great spears, and the third with a rifle. Jim did not know that he was being stalked by three naked, armed savages, and three naked armed savages did not know that they were being stalked by a second white man. We were both fully of the opinion that the African native is, generally speaking, a harmless enough individual, but trouble had been experienced with the natives of the Nuba jebels but a few months before, and several bombing planes had been sent down from Khartoum to quell a disturbance in that area. I decided to keep a wary eye upon them. We proceeded thus for about a mile, when one chanced to look round, and saw me. Instantly the others halted, and after conversing a short space, turned off into the grass. I observed that when I had passed them they returned to the track, and followed behind me. That did not fit in with my purpose, and I loitered to allow them to come up, but they apparently objected as much as I did to being followed by armed strangers, and they kept their distance. Finally I employed their own tactics, stepping off into the grass, and waiting until they drew level. I then halted them, and tried to examine the blunderbuss that one of them carried, partly because it looked an

interesting antique, and partly because I wanted to see whether it was loaded. All my efforts to get the owner to pass it over for my inspection, however, were resolutely resisted, and I could see that if I persisted it would probably cause trouble. I made them understand that they were not to follow us, and when I went on they turned and headed back to their village. Their intentions may have been quite harmless, but after having gone so far, we were agreed that we must never relax precautions. It was perhaps because we never did—or rarely ever—relax precautions, that we did eventually get through to our goal. Travellers through wild places too frequently are lulled into a sense of security by the apparent absence of danger, and disaster too often results from the consequent disregard of possible pitfalls.

It was late in the day before we reached another village, and obtained the services of a guide to put us back on the right route. Having found it again we discovered that we had temporarily left the flooded ground behind, and our path lay through hilly country, that was extremely pleasing to the eye.

The shaded pool by which we had halted, was, we were pleased to imagine, not unlike a corner of a wild garden of Eden, and when, presently, Adam and Eve, in the guise of a Nuba and his smiling lady came to the pool to drink, the fancy did not appear too extravagant. The pair, as natural in their nakedness as the first lovers, were a picture of real grace as they bent over the rocks above the pool. There was beauty in the lithe body of the male, and the female had perfection of form, if ever mortal possessed it. Many men and maidens, passing to their village above the pool, halted at that attractive spot to drink, or fill the gourds they carried on their heads. The girls regarded us shyly—though some were disposed to be coquettish, until their men folk frowned upon them.

We waited in that spot for two and a half hours before our slow oxen arrived, but even then there was

no sign of Umbashi. We waited a couple more hours before he came along in the wake of a perspiring Arab, whom, he explained, he had "bambered" (stolen) from a village miles away in the jebels. When we had lost the track, he had followed our foot marks, lost them in a village, and gone on through the heat for miles, until he realised he was lost. He was in an awkward predicament, as he did not know the name of Kadugli, our immediate goal, and he was quite ignorant of the local language. He did know, however, that Khartoum was on our line of route, and had managed to convey to the villagers that he wanted to go to that place. As the only route through to Khartoum was the one which we were following, the natives had pointed it out to him. It was, however, miles away from the village, and as none appeared disposed to act as his guide he had "bambered" one poor fellow, and hustled him off, after indicating that he wished to be led to the "sika" (path) to Khartoum. Whether or not the fellow had thought that he had been let in for the task of conducting our hopeful on a tour of nearly 500 miles to Khartoum, we could not guess, but he appeared to be greatly relieved when we handed him a gratuity, and dismissed him.

At El Hamra village we changed our bulls and two Arab girls joined up with our *hamla*, or *safari*. We were not at all pleased at having to engage female labour, but the Arabs from whom we hired the bulls failed to understand our objections, and we perforce had to allow them to come along. They were comely enough, but like all of their kind, indescribably filthy. While we were at that village we made rather an amusing little mistake. Before starting that morning our bearded bull-leader had come to us to have a cut on his leg dressed, but as our first aid kit had already been packed, we told him that we would attend to him at the luncheon halt. We got out the iodine and bandages while we were waiting for Umbashi to prepare our meal, and called the bearded one over.

The fellow, somehow or other seemed to have changed slightly in his manner. He was more talkative and more genial, and had a lot to say to us about the mud and water we had been through, which was unusual for our rather taciturn old leader. Our Arabic being of the scantiest, we advised him by signs that we wished to dress his leg. He seemed puzzled, so I pulled up the leg of his loose cotton trousers to indicate that we intended to dress the wound. Mystery of mysteries! It had miraculously healed. There was no sign of a cut. I inspected the other leg, but there was not a scratch on that either. We could have sworn he was the patient, but came to the conclusion that it must have been one of the other members of our *hamla*. The others had gathered round to watch the proceedings, and when I pointed to their thighs, endeavouring to discover who it was that had the injury, they appeared to think that we were accusing them of concealing some stolen property in their garments. To prove their complete honesty, they loosened the tapes around their nether garments, and whipped them off as one man. It was too ludicrous, to see them standing there with their trousers in their hands, looking rather hurt and sorry for themselves, and we could not resist a grin, which completed their discomfiture. Light dawned on us then. The bearded one was a "ring-in". Our man had retired from the *hamla*, and had sent his twin brother from a nearby hut to inform us that he was not going on.

We reached Kadugli early one morning, and proceeded on the same afternoon. Captain Low, of the Royal Irish Fusiliers, the Commanding Officer of the Kadugli section of the Camel Corps, was the only white man in residence when we arrived. He very courteously arranged fresh transport for us, and secured us the best bulls obtainable in the district. For the few hours we stayed at Kadugli, he placed his home at our disposal, and we were able to enjoy one of those rare luxuries—a hot bath.

A few miles beyond Kadugli, we passed a settlement of West African natives, who had built a village high up on the *jebel*. They were Mohammedans, who were on their way to Mecca. Sometimes pilgrims from the west coast of Africa take the best part of a lifetime on their long journey across the continent—many die of old age before they reach their goal. They move slowly from point to point, from desert oasis to desert pool, often taking their families along with them, and sometimes halting along the road and founding colonies, far from their native country. Suakin is usually their point of departure from Africa for Mecca. Once it was quite a frequent happening for Believers to sell their wives and children into slavery in Arabia, but now the British authorities of the Red Sea Province retain a strict watch on the comings and goings of African native pilgrims, and should one return from Mecca without the members of his family who accompanied him thither, matters go hard with him. Nowadays each native is compelled to register before taking boat across the Red Sea. Balfour, the Governor of the Mongalla Province, told us of the harrowing experiences of one such follower of the Prophet, who left the west coast with his wife. He took five years to reach Mecca, and shortly after returning to Africa the fellow was unfortunate enough to lose his wife, who deserted him for another in the Red Sea Province, of which Balfour was then Deputy Governor. The desolated one, finding persuasion useless, set off on his long return tramp across the desert, alone. Arrived back on the west coast, he was asked by the officer of the district in which he lived, what he had done with his wife. The poor chap explained, but as he had failed to get documentary proof of his statements from officials in the Red Sea Province, he was accused of having sold her into slavery. He was sent off, and told not to come back again without her, or without proof of her presence, dead or alive, in Africa.

Back across the Sahara trekked the forlorn outcast, and at long last reported to the Merkaz of the Red Sea Province. There happened to be only a subordinate officer in charge, and that worthy, not knowing what to do, advised the native to report to the Deputy Governor, who was at a post several hundreds of miles away. The then almost desperate follower of Mahomet took the advice, and tramped off. One day he staggered into the Deputy Governor's office, threw his papers down on the desk, and prayed that gentleman to save him from further journeyings. The poor fellow's papers were fixed up, and the Governor did what he could to get him free transport from Province to Province, back to his home. The overburdened old man thanked him before leaving, and wearily turned away. Balfour never heard of him again, but it is to be hoped that Allah awarded him for the sufferings he had undergone in the cause of the Faith.

We had covered some vile country in the earlier stages of our walk, but none of it was worse than the slushy going we encountered during the greater part of that march to El Obeid. The last stage of the journey to Dilling, midway between Kudugli and El Obeid, remains in memory as one of the most arduous days of all, yet it was in many ways typical of the rest of that unattractive stage. We had sweltered all the morning in the moist muggy heat, thirsting terribly, and perspiring freely. Thunder clouds came up rather earlier than usual that day, and rain began to fall at noon. From the start of the afternoon march the cotton-soil was loose and sticky, and we were still dragging our mud-laden boots through it when night fell, and found us out in a desolate sea of mud and slush, far from any place where we could rest for the night. For fifteen weary miles we dragged on through it, and never for a step were we able to move without exerting our leg muscles mightily in order to extract our mud-encumbered boots from the morass. The going became, if anything, more vile as the miles

dragged by. To make matters worse, we were wet to the skin, were very hungry, and the night was pitch dark. To cap it all, we finally found ourselves up to our thighs in water, with the mud below the surface still dragging at our feet. The glow of a camp fire seen late that night was the most welcome sight we could imagine at that time, and when presently, a couple of rude straw shelters loomed up through the darkness, we breathed a mighty sigh of relief. All the huts were occupied by natives, even one, rather better than the rest, which was intended only for the use of Europeans or native officials. About half-a-dozen natives, with their goats, were huddled around a fire built in the centre of the dirty mud floor, but we hustled them out into one of the other structures, had Umbashi tidy the place, borrowed a praying mat from one of the natives, and, setting it before the fire, lay down to sleep. For fifteen miles without a single pause we had struggled through a morass of terrible mud, and we had, in addition, covered ten miles through the scorching heat earlier in the day. We were utterly wearied out, and slept the sleep of complete exhaustion.

With about a mile to go to Dilling, our progress was checked by the flooded Abu Habl khor. It was running a banker, and we had to strip and fight our way against the strong current to make the crossing. Our boys unloaded the bulls, carried the baggage across, and then induced the animals to swim over. The passage was made without mishap, and we reached Dilling early enough in the day to spend an enjoyable afternoon with Hawksworth, the Assistant District Commissioner.

Dilling is a neatly laid-out Arab and Nuba township, its thatch huts and few mud-and-brick buildings being arranged in long, orderly rows, each surrounded by a hedge, with wide passages, or unpaved streets, between. There is a fort, with its garrison of a detachment of the Sudan Camel Corps, then in command of Captain Keays, a fairly well-stocked general store, run by a

Syrian; and some well-built homes for the three European, and several native, officials.

Leaving Dilling, we passed from the cotton-soil country finally, and entered the red-soil area, or "gadood", as the Sudanese call it, until El Obeid was reached, and the deserts that stretch away to the very walls of Cairo, commenced. The days were even hotter as we advanced, rain fell in torrents every afternoon, and throughout the nights, but it was a great relief to leave the terrible black-soil plains behind.

Tramping the thirsty miles to El Obeid, under the blazing sun, our throats parched, and our eyes smarting from the glare, we prayed for the deserts again, where we knew that the air at least would be dry, and the heat preferable to the moist mugginess of the rainy districts. Although conditions were not favourable for tramping, we managed to find many interests along the road.

Groups of Arab men and women passed us at intervals, most of them with their worldly possessions piled on the backs of bulls, donkeys or camels. Almost invariably they rode perched on top of their loads. Occasionally a band of Arabs mounted on horses would ride past, and, once, we saw a body of Arab spearmen on superb Arab steeds cross our track. They were Baggara, heading for their remote encampments, away in the wild country far off the beaten track. The Baggara are fierce, war-like nomads, quite fearless, and, though in these days they give no trouble, they were among the most implacable of Britain's foes in the days of the Mahdi.

We are the only ones walking in that region, and the natives eye us in a puzzled way as we pass. Sometimes fellows going our way offer us their mounts, and volunteer to walk, laughing merrily when we refuse. Often Arabs, sitting astride their ridiculously small donkeys, swinging their lean shanks a few inches clear of the ground, and balancing their red morocco slippers precariously on the end of their upturned toes, in an



The Valley of the Kings, Egypt Tutankhamen's Tomb is
in the Right Centre



Rebuilding Deir el-Bahari, Temple of Queen Hatshepsut
Thebes



A Corner of the Ramesseum Thebes



The Pivoted Span on a small Canal Bridge raised to let
Nile Craft Pass

irritating manner—one expects them to fall off every second or so, and they never do—would accompany us for miles on our way. They would chatter incessantly to us, oblivious of the fact that we understood very little of what they were saying, but they were good-natured souls, and would, had we been agreeable, halted every few miles or so to brew us a pot of their milkless but well-sugared tea.

One day, one of them, possibly saved us from death, by his vigilance. It was a sweltering morning, and we were plodding on little more than half awake. The Arab, who was riding a little to our right, also appeared to be drowsy, but as we passed under a small tree he gave a sudden warning shout, and we skipped back, just in time to see a wicked-looking head dart down out of the branches above us. It was a tree-snake, about four feet long, and, we believe, one of those nasty specimens that invariably lies in wait in trees for victims passing beneath, to strike them down as soon as they come within reach. Jim put a bullet through this specimen, but it appeared to ignore the wound, and slithered very actively around the branches. It tried to reach the ground, but we beat it back, and, borrowing a bundle of spears from our friend, who carried a quiver full of them, we had an entertaining ten minutes spear-throwing, and at length succeeded in skewering the reptile.

Late the next afternoon, we came to a few rest huts by a desert well, and there encountered a dozen Sudanese police-boys, in charge of an ancient, who proudly informed us he had fought with "de Kitchener". Lying about in the sand outside the huts were fifty or sixty stout oblong boxes—each sealed and secured by a padlock. The ancient informed us that they contained £30,000 in silver coinage!

The money was going to Kadugli and Talodi, the two cotton centres of the province, to pay the natives for their cotton crops. We wondered what Ned Kelly would have done had he come on all that money out in

that isolated spot, guarded by a party of badly-armed men, and in charge of an old chap in the last stage of senile decay. Our notorious fellow-countryman must have turned in his grave that day to see us ignore the opportunity. We had the fellow in charge line up his men. They allowed us to handle their rifles—*Martini-Henrys*, stamped with the dates of 1878 and 1889—and we noticed that none of them was loaded. There were twenty camels grazing nearby, on to which the bullion could be loaded, but when we suggested to Umbashi that we make off with the Government money, and set up as great Sheiks out in some desert oasis, he turned the proposition down, affirming that he was not a "steal-boy", and would have nothing to do with "bambering" the loot. We contented ourselves with taking a picture of the outfit, and departed, after dining with the man who had fought with Kitchener.

Reaching two giant baobabs one afternoon, after a long tramp through a very dry section of the country, we lost no time in scaling one of them in order to obtain some water, but found the hollow trunk quite dry. Descending, we made a circuit of both trees, and found that each had a small square opening cut in them, about five feet from the ground. Then we remembered having been told that during the Mahdi's rebellion followers of that fanatic cut off a large portion of the loyal Arabs' water supply in the region of El Obeid, by cutting holes in the trunks of the baobabs. Fortunately there was a party of Arabs camped in the shade of the trees, and they pressed on us large quantities of their favourite beverage—milkless tea, sweetened with great lumps of sugar. Those Arabs appeared greatly interested in us. They gathered around, borrowed my comb, and a mirror from Umbashi, and combed their beards. They then asked to be allowed to look at an ancient copy of *The Times* which we carried. We handed it to them, and they sat long pouring over it, studying the pictures in it upside down, with a pseudo-intelligent air. We had noticed that natives generally

could never make head nor tail of a photograph. Whenever we pointed out the figure, say, of a man, and told them what it represented they would chuckle knowingly, thinking we were fooling them, but would never believe that the outlines before them represented anything of which they had any knowledge. It came as a shock to us one day when we handed Umbashi a clear print of himself, and after he had studied it for a long while, asked him who it was. He retorted "Bwana Jim". Umbashi did learn to recognise a photograph as something more than a card with black and white markings on it, but to the very end of the journey he could not always identify the subject of the clearest of pictures with any certainty. Even after he had studied hundreds of photographs, we would still find him gazing admiringly at one of himself held upside down. Umbashi excited great interest amongst the natives met from those parts onwards, and although to us he did not appear to differ so very greatly in type from some of the Sudanese, all who saw him instantly recognised him as a "bonyork" (stranger), and a real curiosity. We had taught him a few Arabic words, and he used them to declare to those who interrogated him that he was a great Sultani from far away. He was believed, but his stocks must have dropped considerably when those he sought to impress saw him busy around the cooking-fire.

Leaving the *hamla* to follow on, we set off from the baobab trees to cover the last few miles to El Obeid. At the end of an hour's walking the minaret of a Moslem mosque came in view, and a little later we left the open country behind, and entered one of the most interesting towns in Africa.

Passing by wattle-and-daub huts on the outskirts of the town, where at that hour natives were stretched out in the shade before their doors, smoking, sleeping, or talking in groups, we came to the heart of a real city of the desert. There were miles and miles of brown, mud-walled houses, of all sizes and of varying pretensions,

lining wide sandy thoroughfares that formed a veritable maze, despite the obvious attempt of some authority to preserve a semblance of order in their alignment.

In an open square a party of fine looking Arabs in spotless linen garments were saddling a mob of magnificent Arab stallions; further on, we passed three less-cleanly merchants, riding on great swaying camels into the town from the direction of the deserts to the east, the lightly-burdened pack-animals following them suggesting that they were returning from a successful trading trip. Nearer the centre of the town, we passed the mule and horse lines of the Camel Corps, where scores of grooms and soldiers were busily engaged attending to the feeding of a hundred or so fine animals. Small bazaars we passed, detoured around the great high, mud walls of a fortress-like enclosure, and came to a tree-shaded pond, where long-legged cranes stood sunning themselves, oblivious to the movement and bustle of the thoroughfares about them. Vultures, kites and carrion-crows circled in flocks overhead; the graceful, but despised, tick-birds, or lesser-egrets, played undisturbed with the mules and oxen in the open spaces, near the stagnant waters of rapidly drying pools, alighting on their backs, and riding there sedately, as the animals moved from place to place. A guide attached himself to us—a tattered, decrepit old native policeman—and showed us the way to the house of Mr. Thomson, the Acting Governor of the Kordofan Province. That gentleman, however, was ill with fever, and was sleeping, so that we did not disturb him. The District Commissioner (Mr. C. H. Skeet) came along as we were preparing to leave, and invited us to his house, where we sat on an open stoep, in the shade of a great tree, and enjoyed the luxury of tea and cake. We had almost forgotten what cake looked like.

Other officers stationed in the township, arrived while we were there awaiting the arrival of our transport, so that our party numbered seven by the time drinks were brought. The new arrivals were the Assis-

tant District Commissioner, Mr. H. B. Arber, Doctor Wallace, and two officers of the Camel Corps. It was the largest party of Britishers we had talked with for many months, and they being jovial souls, time passed very pleasantly until nightfall, when we took up our quarters in the guest-room of the very fine El Obeid Club. At dinner that night at Arber's quarters, we made fresh acquaintances, Major Bird of the Camel Corps, and a cadet, recently out from home. Later, two other officers joined us, and we spent one of the most jovial evenings in many months. After our long exile from our kind, it was a pleasure indeed to meet so many Britishers in one evening, and we voted El Obeid the brightest spot we had struck north of Kenya. Arber motored us round the town next day, and an interesting place we found it. It is quite an extensive township, spreading far out across the flat desert sands, which commence suddenly on the southern borders of the town. There is a stamp of great age on the thousands of identical-looking mud houses sheltering behind their mud-wall enclosures. The structures, we were told crumble in with the coming of the rains, but are easily replastered and restored.

The afternoon of our first day in El Obeid, we threaded the throngs of white-robed Arabs and their black gowned womenfolk, passed the native laundries, the metal-working shops, the miserable open-air bazaars—each section grouped together, as in England, in the days of the Craft Guilds—and made our way to the big market, where we purchased our supplies for the 260 miles' journey across the desert, to Khartoum.

We also had our boots mended, and the "fundi" made quite a good job of them, so that we were more hopeful of their carrying us through to Cairo.

Although great caravans of lumbering camels passed in a continuous stream through the sandy thoroughfares of the town, coming or going from distant desert outposts, we had quite a little difficulty in arranging for camel transport across the inhospitable wastes

which lay before us. We had decided to go via Bara, the headquarters of the Sudan Camel Corps, two days' journey to the north of El Obeid, and strike through the desert, to reach the Nile at El Geteina, about sixty miles south of Khartoum. The country had an evil reputation amongst the local Arabs, and we could not persuade any of them to make the whole journey. With the assistance of Arber, we eventually succeeded in getting a scoundrelly old camel-contractor—all camel-contractors are scoundrels—to hire us two camels and two men, to take us as far as Bara. Arber agreed to despatch a telegram to that outpost, requesting the officer-in-charge to have two further camels ready for us, which would carry our baggage for the remainder of the desert journey. Arber also loaned us two fantasses, each capable of holding ten gallons of water. Those would be carried on one camel, and the remainder of our baggage would be loaded on the other. There were long waterless stretches of heavy sandy country ahead, but we reckoned on making long stages, and completing the journey to Khartoum in twelve days. From Khartoum we would have 1,500 more miles of desert to cover, and then we could rest from our labours. The indications were that the last stages would prove as arduous as any, but with our arrival at Khartoum the end of the road would be almost in sight, and after over a year of journeying, we were able to take much comfort from that.

CHAPTER XXI

THROUGH THE HESKENITE

A COLOUR-CHANGING PROBLEM—THE DESERT ROAD TO BARA—
TROUBLES IN THE HESKENITE—ARAB WELLS—THE NILE AGAIN—EL
GETEINA—IN THE HAREM—THE TREK TO KHARTOUM

TOWARDS the evening of our last day in El Obeid a smoky-grey haze had come up from the north, and hung over the town until sunset. The local inhabitants regarded it as a good sign. They said that such a haze at that period of the year heralded the coming of the north wind, and with it the approach of cooler weather. Surely enough a steady north wind sprang up at night-fall, and continued blowing until bedtime, and it certainly had a cooling effect on the atmosphere.

We sat that night on the cool verandah of the quarters of Captain Williams, the Provincial Veterinary Officer, and sipped sundowners in company with Skeet and another young officer of the Camel Corps. As we sat there, we were introduced to a few of the minor trials that men stationed at that post have to endure. We were plagued throughout the evening by clouds of grasshoppers, beetles, moths and other flying pests, that swarmed in out of the night in thousands, and battered themselves against the shaded candles. They beat a continuous tattoo on the walls behind us, crawled down our necks, smacked into our faces in their blind flights, and committed suicide in our drinks. So bad were they that our host produced his favourite pet, a horrible-looking chameleon that had a reputation as a gorgier of insects, and the added distinction of being able to change colour more quickly than any other

chameleon in Africa. His proud owner claimed that he could adapt himself to match any coloured surface he was placed upon, and no colour had ever beaten him. We had seen many chameleons, but most of them had been very modest performers in the colour-changing act. This specimen certainly paled rapidly when he was placed on the white table covering, but when, after performing a series of acrobatic feats on various unstable objects littering the table—generally with painful results to himself—he scaled the stem of a candle chandelier, and fetched up on the gorgeous-hued shade—a thing of yellow, green, purple and red spots, the unhappy reptile met his Waterloo, and sadly disgraced his master. It did its best, but a dull yellow was all it could manage, and even that effort cost it a good deal. It lost all interest in the insect pests it had been brought forth to destroy, after that. It remained in a torpor for a long space, and was then taken away by its discomfited protector—a fallen idol. We suffered the insects in silence after that, out of sympathy for our host.

We dined with the District Commissioner, and were genuinely sorry when the hour came round to take leave of our El Obeid friends. All had done everything to render our stay in that interesting township a pleasure, and El Obeid, with its hospitable crowd of good fellows, was one of the most pleasant of our halts on the Cape to Cairo road.

Our camels arrived betimes next morning, and we were soon ready to move off. I myself was hardly in condition for a long desert march, as one foot was in rather a bad way, being badly festered, and very sore. Dr. Wallace had done much to alleviate the pain, and had dressed the foot in preparation for the journey, but when morning came I found I was unable to put on my boots, and had to begin the trek in a pair of native sandals—rudely-made articles consisting of a piece of shaped rhino hide, held to the foot by means of thongs, one of which passed between the toes, and

joined another drawn over the instep of the foot. Very early in the journey, the thongs rubbed a hole in the skin, and the rub festered quickly.

The Camel Corps, at manœuvres on the flat parade ground at the edge of the town, were among the few to see us depart. El Obeid is a demarcation town. South lies the Sudan of the black cotton-soil and the swamps; north stretches the other Sudan—the Sudan of limitless deserts. Straightaway we noticed a decided change in the country. The high grass was gone, and the short grass, which grew in sparse clumps, was withered and dry. Almost at once we encountered the terrible heskenite burr, which was to prove one of the worst trials of the stage to Khartoum. It grows on a small collection of grass stalks, about a dozen stalks to a clump, and every one of them bears about thirty needle-pointed burrs, that cling tenaciously to anything that brushes against them. Caution is necessary in removing them, for their tiny spikes stick out in all directions, pierce the flesh if the slightest pressure is placed on them, and generally break off, setting up painful festers. All the grass growing in that part of the country is full of them, and indeed they are almost the only form of vegetation over large areas. We could see nothing about them to commend them, but we learned later that for all their vileness they still served a useful purpose. Some of the Arabs on the fringe of the desert engage in agriculture, but at that season the unfortunates had lost all their crops, owing to the depredations of locusts, and had been driven to collecting the heskenite burrs, which they crushed, boiled, and then made into cakes. Camels of course, eat them, but they will eat anything that grows out of the soil.

The road to Bara lay through deep, red sand, that was unbearably hot to plough through, once the sun came up. I tried walking barefoot for a while, as the sandals were giving a lot of trouble, but the devilish heskenite and the blazing sand united in dissuading me from that rash procedure. We passed many Arabs

riding by on trotting camels, which are reckoned to be amongst the fleetest in the world. They eyed us strangely as we larded along, but as the natives of Africa regard all Europeans as mad, the fact that we elected to walk through that region occasioned little comment.

We did twenty-seven miles that day, and both Jim and I were almost done in when we halted to pitch camp. We had both suffered intolerable torture from the burrs, and the heat throughout the day had been something a shade worse than any we had previously endured. For my part, twenty-seven miles through that furnace on a crippled foot, which was irritated by burrs, and rubbed raw by the heavy sand, that found its way under the bandages, was an ordeal. We were still walking when night came on. Occasionally bands of nightriders padded quietly out of the darkness, their ghostly-looking trotting camels almost running us down before we observed them, so silently did they come over the soft sand. Once a party of half a dozen such prowlers passed, and hushed their guttural jabbering when they saw us. After going on for a short distance, they returned and passed ahead of us. A few miles on we suddenly came on them again, spread out across the track in a semi-military formation, and they made no move to allow us to pass. We kept our rifles in readiness and shouted a challenge to them. They did not budge, however, and remained perfectly motionless as our small party threaded by them. They may have been marauders looking for something easy to steal, or they may have been a police patrol, but they did not molest us, and we never learned who they were. After getting stuck in a particularly vile thicket of heskenite, which covered us with the accursed burrs so thickly that we were unable to walk a step further, without removing several hundreds of them, we decided to stop, and putting up our beds on the track turned in to sleep. The mail carriers from Bara, making a night run to El Obeid, to avoid the heat, nearly ran us down at

midnight, and would certainly have done so, had not some strange intuition warned us of their coming, and set us shouting to them to keep clear. The riders must have been fast asleep, for they were within a yard of us when we yelled to them, and only the fact that their startled camels sheered off suddenly, saved us from being mixed up under their pads.

We shall long remember the next day's walk to Bara. It was blisteringly hot from the start, there was no shade, the sand was deep and yielding, and the heskenite burr pestered us at every step. Miles seemed like leagues. Not wishing to be tramping all day through the heat, we passed ahead of the camels, and soon left them miles behind. As a result, we had to do the whole journey without water. It was hotter by far than on the previous day, and the temperature must have been about 120 degrees in the shade. After five miles we found ourselves barely able to stagger on. The metal on our rifles was painfully hot to the touch, the glare from the sand made our eyes burn, and at the end of another five miles our tongues felt like leather in our mouths. The whole distance covered that day was a bare thirteen miles, but we just made it, and neither of us wished to do such a thirteen miles again. The relief with which we saw the dull, blue gleam of the corrugated-iron roofing of the huts of Bara, was deep and heartfelt. All we wanted then was a drink, and some shade, and we urged ourselves on past the outlying mud huts and the clustering palms and little gardens where melons grew, with our last remaining strength. Beneath a large Moreton Bay fig tree we halted to put on our shirts, which we had taken off during the journey and draped over our helmets—we were thoroughly sun-tanned long before that, and preferred to travel light, rather than endure the discomfort of walking in thick khaki shirts. Then, after removing a few scores of burrs from our flesh, we made our way to the Merkaz, guided thither by the twin flags of Britain and Egypt that drooped above it. Within the

building, we met Mr. Hillard, the Assistant Commissioner in charge of the Post, and the sole European inhabitant of Bara. Within five minutes of greeting him we had drained two fair-sized pitchers of cool water, and felt better. Hillard won our hearts straightaway by suggesting that we go up to his house for a cold bath. He said that he had arranged for our camels to take us to El Geteina, via Homra Wells. He was busy at the moment with the trial of eight Arab nomads, and would join us later at lunch. The criminals with whom he was dealing had raided a police post in the desert, half-murdered a native N.C.O. and a companion with an axe, and had been trailed for days through the desert by a band of law-abiding Arabs, assigned to the task by their Omda, or headman. They had been arrested finally and brought into Bara. The wounded N.C.O. was at that moment in the stifling, little Bara hospital, slowly going off his head, and for the crime, his assailants were sentenced that day to fourteen years' imprisonment apiece. Such little jobs are typical of the work done by men of the Sudan outposts.

That cold bath was something to remember, and lemon drinks and a bottle of cold beer followed. It was heavenly. We lunched with Hillard, clad only in shirts and shorts. Hillard was a happy-go-lucky companion, and ideal company for such an afternoon. He had taken honours in rugger at Oxford, and had failed twice in Arabic in later life, but was enamoured of the Service. We regretted the necessity of having to leave such a good companion the same day, but Khartoum was calling, and in those days the desire to push on amounted to a passion.

From Bara we turned east across the desert, and covered another eleven miles before throwing ourselves down to sleep under the stars, on the soft sand.

Our route for the next nine days lay across a pitiless waste of parched thorn and spiky grasses, wearying in its monotony, and insufferably hot. Noon on the second day of our journey found us far out on a desolate, bare,

sandy waste with the sun scorching us like a blast from the fires of hell. Jim, Umbashi and I, had been walking ahead of the camels, and were parched, and craving for water. We waited until the camels came up in order to slake our thirsts from the waterbags which we had hung on them. But we found that the bags had dropped off, and were lost. As it would have been necessary to unload the camels out on that gridiron, in order to get at the water in our fantasses, we decided to do without, and endured our thirsts for another five hours, until we reached a small thorn-bush, and camped till sundown. It was a typical day in our march across the Southern Libyan, and the night march from that camp was in no way dissimilar from the night stages from then on until the Nile was reached.

We were heading for Zereiga Well, and when darkness came on, our sufferings became acute. Thorns and burrs got down into Jim's boots, and Umbashi and I, who were walking in sandals, found it an agony to move. My right heel by that time was poisoned, and the foot was badly festered in two other places. The ubiquitous burrs got into the bandages, and in removing them scores of broken-off thorn needles became embedded in my fingers. At the end of the march the index finger and thumb were pulpy and sponge-like, through having been punctured in so many places. Umbashi and Jim were in much the same plight, and we grew to hate that heskenite country with an undying hatred. The thorns got so bad that particular night, that we were compelled to camp miles short of our goal, and completed the march to the well next morning.

It is the wells that have been sunk down through the sands and the clay sub-soil of the Libyan that make the country habitable. Without them the Meramra and Nawahia nomads who roam with their camels, and flocks of huge fat-tailed sheep and goats, across the howling wilderness, could never exist. In some places the wells go down to 130 and 150 feet. Invariably there is a more or less permanent encampment by the wells,

and we found the sheiks of those desert villages extremely hospitable fellows. We mapped our route to take in about eight wells, and made successive camps at Zereiga, Shegeila, Nevelat, Homra Wells, Sheikh Bashir Maqbul, Shatawi, and Faki Mustapha. At each the sheik would come out to meet us, conduct us to his hut, or to the shade of a spreading thorn, and have little wooden beds, with their mattresses of interlaced leather thongs, brought for us to recline on. The women of the tribe would then be sent off to fetch us water, a few sticks of firewood, and bowls of goats' or camels' milk. After the heat, the glare and the discomfort of the thorns, we enjoyed every moment of our rests in those Arab villages, and were content to lie full-stretch on our beds, following a shave and a bath, idly watching the tribes folk going about their trifling tasks in their leisured way.

Half-way across the desert, we passed from the Kordofan Province into the White Nile Province, but, for days, the country was absolutely unchanged. Rising with the morning star; trekking on through the blistering heat of forenoon, and sometimes until later in the day; camping by the desert wells; and continuing on again by moonlight, we came at length in sight of a long line of feathery palms. It was the Nile again, after a month of flooded black-soil plains, and burning desert sands. The north wind, although it heralded the approach of cooler weather, was at that stage a searing, withering blast, whipping up the dust from the parched earth, and scorching our faces until the skin was as dry as leather. We despaired of every striking cool weather again, while our trek lasted.

Although we had been walking without guides, and with only a rough chart to guide us, we struck the river but a few miles south of El Geteina, and we counted ourselves fortunate that we had got across a rather terrifying tract of the Sudan without mishap. After the seemingly endless miles of sand, we found it hard to conjure up visions of flowing water, and the morasses of

the slime and mud that we had had to contend with in the vicinity of the Nile, further south, appeared to us, at end of the hot, dusty day on which we first sighted the Nile again, as being nothing but nightmares of a previous existence. Then suddenly our route to the river bank was barred by a small khorr. We floundered through it, and came presently to a second, where there was more water and a good deal more black mud. We got across without much difficulty, and then yet another khorr stretched before us. It was about 200 yards across, and some natives in the middle of it, who were endeavouring to push or pull their diminutive donkeys across, informed us that the water was waist deep, and that there was over a foot of mud in addition. Leaving Umbashi with the camels, and giving the "djemella" instructions to make their way to a point directly opposite to El Geteina, by whatever route they could discover, Jim and I stripped, and plunged into the mud once more. Truly country changes with startling rapidity in the Sudan. As we floundered through the mire we passed shouting Arabs dragging their donkeys through the ooze by their ears, in such a way that all that was visible of the little chaps were their muzzles held just above the water. Here and there were donkeys stuck fast, with only their noses protruding out of the bog. No one appeared to mind them, and we learned that they were in no danger of being ultimately suffocated, as such experiences were common ones in their daily routine, in that difficult country.

The moon was rising high before we won through to the other side, and reached the Nile shore. A tattered Arab, whom we met strolling through the darkness turned and guided us through the tiny villages of the riverain Arabs, clustered along the Nile bank, to a point, where, he told us, we could wait until a "mahdir", or sailing boat, picked us up, and took us across to El Geteina, on the opposite bank. Our guide had picked up a fellow at one of the villages, and both set up a shouting and a hallooing across the water, to the

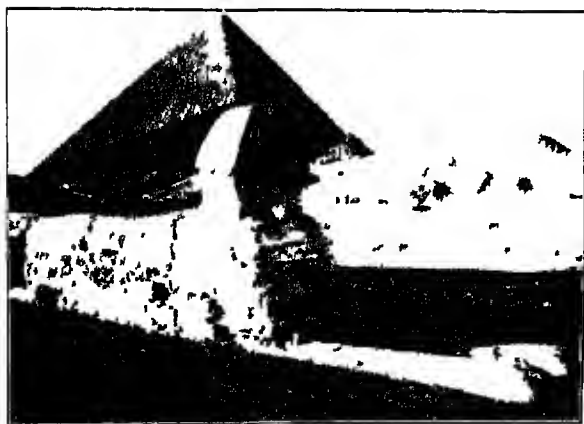
effect that two "mafetisheen" desired transport. After an interval, answering shouts came faintly back over the two miles of river. We could not interpret them, so settled down to sleep. Our camels had not arrived, so we were without blankets, and the night was bitterly cold. Jim was soon asleep, but the pain of my aching foot, and the light of the moon striking full in my face, combined to keep me awake. Tired as I was I was able, dully, to appreciate the romantic beauty of that little tableau of the Nile by moonlight. Feathery topped palms were sighing in a rising wind, the great river flowed silently by, her surface shimmering goldenly where the moonlight caught it, and a rather picturesque old son of the desert knelt by the waters' edge, intoning reverently and softly, "La Allah illa illellah!"

It was very soothing after the travail of the desert, and I was almost on the point of dozing off, when the devout one, who a moment before appeared to have forgotten all earthly cares, suddenly bounced to his feet as the last caressing syllable left his lips, and shattered the calm by renewing his yelling and shouting to the boatmen across the water.

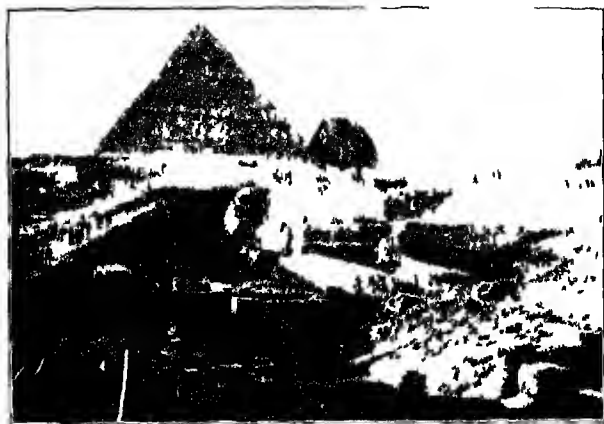
At 3.30 a.m. a fine yacht, manned by three Arabs, grounded close to the shore, and took us on board. The wind had dropped, but the men unshipped great heavy oars, and slowly paddled us across the current. A blaze of lights seemed suddenly to arise out of the darkness very close at hand, and to the accompaniment of excited yells and frenzied rowing on the part of our boatmen, a Nile steamer grazed past us. The next I remembered was that we were aground on the opposite bank, and a police askari was offering to guide us to the house of the Mamur of the town. We had concluded the walk from Bara with a twenty-eight mile trudge through the intolerable heat. We had arrived at the river soaked and muddy through our dip in the khorr, had lain cramped and shivering throughout the greater part of a cold night, and, try as we would, we could not keep our eyes open. Stumbling along, more asleep than



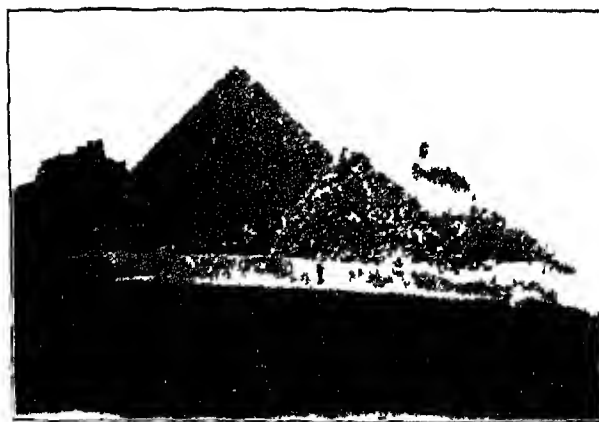
The Alabaster Sphinx at Memphis



The Sphinx and Pyramid of Cheops Giza



The Sphinx and Pyramid of Chephren, showing recent
Excavations.



The Pyramids.

awake, we were ushered into a bare-courtyard, enclosed by a high mud wall, and were greeted by the Mamur, who emerged from his little mud house in his night attire. He spoke no English, but as he had been advised of our coming, we had no difficulty in explaining who we were, and within a few minutes two beds had been brought, and we tumbled into them, being sound asleep almost in an instant.

It was broad daylight when we opened our eyes, and saw our friend the Mamur setting tea and cakes down on a little table between our beds. As we had not eaten since the previous morning, we set to, and demolished that food to the last crumb. A boy then came with an urn of water, and bathed our feet and legs. Before we were out of bed, a Sudanese doctor arrived with his tool chest, and I then submitted to the roughest surgery I had ever had to suffer. He cut open a badly festered toe with a blunt knife, pulled off the top of several wounds with a pair of rusty pliers, cut another neatly around with a pair of scissors, dabbed iodine on his handiwork, trussed up my foot in swathes of bandages, and departed, smiling. I managed to make my curses sound like thanks, and assured him before he departed that a second visit would be unnecessary, as we would be moving on as soon as our camels arrived. He appeared somewhat disappointed, but said nothing.

Breakfast with the hospitable Mamur was something more than a meal to us two starving travellers. It was a repast. A common dish of food was set between us and our host, and we each in turn jabbed our forks at random into any of the several varieties of food it contained, as fancy took us. It was a method of eating not without its merits. It saved a deal of dishwashing.

While waiting for our camels, we dozed off to sleep again, and the next I remember was Jim telling me it was 1 p.m. I sat up, and disturbed a "wallah", or servant, who was cooling my perspiring brow with a fan, and dabbing my face with a cool, wet rag. Our camels had arrived at the far bank, the men had

brought the luggage across, and we lost no time in paying off the two Bara "djemella", giving them £E.2 for the return trip.

We engaged two fresh beasts to take us to Khartoum, took leave of our courteous and obliging host, and were on the road again at 4 o'clock in the afternoon. An English-speaking sub-Mamur escorted us to a well, beyond the old site of El Geteina—known as Amara village.

The path from El Geteina ran over bare flat country, and we kept the river in view throughout the first day. It was still very hot walking, and not a breath of air was stirring. As we marched behind the camels next day, and the heat grew steadily more and more oppressive, the blue waters of the Nile appeared ever to be beckoning to us to tarry a while and bathe, so that when we reached the mud huts of Wad el Kereil we stripped and took a plunge, risking the bilharzia, a minute organism which infests many African rivers, and which bores through the flesh and sets up an infection of the internal organs. The Omda, or Sheikh of Sheikhs, of the district invited us to pause a while in his village, and as it was unbearably hot standing out in the sun, we accepted the invitation, and made for the shelter of one of the mud huts. We could scarcely have selected any resting-place more calculated to displease our host. Unwittingly, we had entered the sacred precincts of his harem, and as we passed through an outer chamber a bevy of excited ladies, all heavily veiled, fled from an inner room, dragged their draperies over their heads as they scurried past us, and made for the sanctuary of another hut. The Omda, appreciating that our intrusion was unintentional, waved aside our apologies, and bade us be seated on the royal bed. It was covered with rather filthy cushions, and did not look very inviting, but we turned some of the covers, and made ourselves comfortable. To an observer, had one chanced to peep through the doorway of that chamber, the picture of two sun-blackened, ragged, and unshaven

wanderers, esconced in the centre of a pile of more or less grimy cushions, in a stiflingly hot, dusty, mud hut, must have effectively dispelled any romantic ideas, he or she may have entertained regarding a sheikh's harem. It was the filthiest hole we had ever selected for a camping spot. The Omda, who had left us, arrived after an interval, bearing a bowl of clear, cool liquid. We thanked him for it, and while he looked on amazed, used it for shaving water. He attempted to dissuade us from the operation, and urged us to drink, but we merely smiled our acknowledgments of his consideration for us, and replied that we would shave first, and drink coffee afterwards, not caring to drink the Nile water. He shook his head sadly, and left us. I had set aside a little of the liquid from the bowl for the purpose of cleaning my teeth, and as soon as I dipped my brush into it, and set about the operation, I realised the awful mistake we had made. The hospitable fellow had brought us a bowl of sweet, watery syrup for our delectation—and we had shaved in it, in front of his eyes! It is small wonder that natives believe Britishers to be mad.

On the way to Khartoum, we stopped at Gebel Aulia, and were astonished at the size of the place. Although there was only one European and his wife stationed there, we passed row after row of solidly built, attractive-looking stone houses; a fine rest-house, with about a score of rooms; offices, and native quarters; and passed along several avenues of fine trees. Surrounded by a beautiful garden, we found the house of M. and Mme. T. Heitoum, of the Egyptian Irrigation Service. Madame Heitoum was the first European woman we had spoken with in four months, and although she spoke no English, the sound of her voice was welcome music to our ears.

We experienced that night what was to us, in those days, the rare delight of sleeping between sheets, in the luxurious rest-hut of Gebel Aulia, and woke considerably refreshed to face the heat and dust of the last

twenty-nine miles to Khartoum. The Nile below Khartoum is not an exceptionally beautiful stream. Its dark, muddied waters flow between low sandy banks, and vegetation by its shore is of the scantiest. Yet such is the desolation of the surrounding country, that the gleam of water, and the greenery of the few graceful palms fringing its course, are real delights to the eye.

The Nile was in full flood at that season, and was in places over two miles wide, though at low water it is probably not above a mile. As the water recedes the villagers make small holes in the wet sand with a steel-tipped stick, and the women and children follow behind and drop seeds of grain into the holes, cover them in with their feet, and so the crops are sown. Many of the villagers are keen fishermen, and we passed groups of them, bare to the waist, and clad only in loose linen drawers, combing the shallows with their nets, or putting out into deeper water in clumsy, barge-like boats, to reap the rich harvest which the river yields. We tasted a quantity of the fish, and found it a welcome variation of our rice and oatmeal diet.

We walked late into the evening that day, and about 8 p.m. saw ahead of us the lights of Khartoum gleaming through the clear desert night. Our goal of many weary months—a goal which we sometimes had despaired of ever reaching—was in sight! Preferring to make our entry in the early morning we camped down out in the open, and slept within seven miles of the city's outskirts. Unexpectedly, rain fell that night. It was not heavy, but was sufficient to give us a soaking, and I contracted a chill which brought on the malaria. Except for brief intervals, I was a prey to the fever for the remainder of the journey to Cairo.

It should have been a great day for us, that Friday when we marched into Khartoum, and reached the six thousandth milepost on our journey. Strangely enough we experienced little elation. The fact was that we were both growing mentally weary, and only

Cairo, and the end of the road could be calculated to arouse real enthusiasm in us. We were not dispirited—the contrary, rather—but a year of almost continual hardships, had set us craving for a rest, and a few of the amenities of civilisation. Apart from the fever we were all in good fettle. Jim had had comparative freedom during the last months from malarial bouts, and most of those irritating tropical ulcers, contracted in the swamps, had healed. Umbashi had never had a day's illness on the trek, and his determination to finish the job on foot was as strong as ours. For my part I had put on over a stone and a half in weight, but malaria had been playing rather evil pranks with me, and the added physical burden of a bad heel, which still prevented me from getting a boot on my foot, had the effect of taking away much from the pleasure of the journey in those days. We all counted ourselves extremely fortunate, however, in having reached thus far, more or less unscathed, and we resolved that for every day of the two months immediately following our departure from Khartoum, we would walk twenty-five miles, whatever it cost us, and arrive in Cairo a few days before Christmas.

CHAPTER XXII

THE SUDAN CROSSED

~~KHARTOUM—MIRAGES—FRIENDLY ARABS—SHENDI TO ABU HAMED—
THE NUBIAN—WADI HALFA—THE MARCH INTO EGYPT~~

KHARTOUM was entered at 8.15 a.m. on October 18. The approach to the historic old town on the south is unimpressive. The traveller emerges from dry hot plains, and enters rambling dusty streets, lined with the tumbledown, mud brick dwellings, where live the lower classes of Khartoum's native population. Block after block of those sordid houses we passed, trudging through deep sand, and covering about two miles, before we reached a street worthy of the name. It was strange to set our feet on Sirdar Avenue, the first paved way we had trod since leaving Nairobi town, three and a half months before. Passing down it we reached the European quarter.

We took up our quarters at the Gordon Hotel, and spent the remainder of the day, and the two following days, arranging for the next stage of our trip. The District Commissioner, the Civil Secretary, and all other administrative officials proved extremely obliging, and rendered us every assistance in their power. Their help proved invaluable to us, not only during our tramp for the remainder of the distance across the Sudan, but also assisted us materially in the early stage of our journey across Egypt. Particularly grateful we were to the Traffic Manager of the Sudan Government Railways, who made arrangements for us to draw water supplies at various points on the railway across the Nubian Desert, a stretch of 250 miles, where not a drop

of water was to be obtained, apart from the railway stopping-places.

One of our first concerns was to engage camel transport, and our usual protracted dispute with a camel contractor ensued. Through the mediation of the District Commissioner, we eventually reached an agreement, and settled down to wait until two camels were brought in from the desert beyond Omdurman, despite the fact that there were droves of the beasts in Khartoum. Twice we had advices from the police officer at Omdurman, that our camels had left that point for our hotel, and twice they failed to turn up. The excuse the contractor put forward was that the beasts had, on each occasion, reached the Omdurman bridge, been scared by the traffic, and bolted away to the desert again. They eventually arrived, our baggage was packed, our fantasses filled, and we bade farewell to Khartoum at 3 p.m. on October 21.

While the city was taking its siesta, we passed down the Blue Nile front and over the Khartoum North Bridge, where a toll of one piastre per camel, and three milliems for each of our party, was levied by an Arab toll-gatherer, and headed into the desert once more. The camels were the slowest we had ever used, and we made but eleven miles, to Kadaru, before nightfall overtook us.

Intending to adhere rigidly to our twenty-five miles a day schedule, despite the set-back of having to put up with painfully slow transport, we turned out in the darkness before dawn, and were ready to move off in the moonlight. We had just finished loading when one of the camels, in leaping to its feet, pitched its load over its head. Cases were smashed, sugar bestrewed the ground, and our precious baggage was littered in all directions. It was an unpropitious start, but it was only a sample of the trials which we were destined to have to put up with in the next two months. The slow gait of the camels meant that, in order to do our full distance daily, we had to toil along through the overpowering

heat and blinding glare, of the driest, barest, and most uninteresting country imaginable. For days we saw nothing but stony wastes, patches of dry yellow grass, a few thorns and depressing mirages. Those mirages, though they hinted at the presence of water, and served but to increase the intolerable thirsts from which we suffered daily, were but pitiful replicas of real water, and we were never really deceived by them. Generally we walked about fifteen miles through the blistering heat of the forenoon, gathering chips of wood and fragments of kindling, for our fires, as we went, as firewood was as precious as gold in that desolate country, and would then camp under some miserable thorn-bush, to wait for the dawdling camels to come up. Lying bathed in perspiration, grimy, and suffering prodigious thirsts, we would scan the route we had come, praying for a first sight of our intolerably slow-crawling camels. At length shapes would rise up from the heat haze quite close at hand, and we would watch them intently to discover if they were our beasts bringing water and food to relieve our discomfort. As we watched, the shapes would undergo queer changes, until we were not sure whether they were animals or fantastic phantoms conjured up by a disordered brain. They would belly out, and puff up, stretch into the shapes of enormous dachshunds, their heads would drift away from their bodies, rejoin again, and then the whole shape would rise into the air, and appear to be advancing through the haze, some feet above the ground. At times the figures would assume elephantine outlines, at others dwindle to the proportions of bloated pigs. From moment to moment we would vary our surmises as to the identity of the animals approaching. First we would declare they were donkeys, then avow they were rhinos, advancing backwards; again we would swear they were our camels, until, on closer approach we would see they were Arab oxen. We would never begin to hope that they were our camels until we caught sight of our faithful Umbashi leading the procession,

though sometimes it would be difficult to locate him, as frequently the haze played such tricks that we were faced with the apparition of our stalwart marching through the air, on the level of the camels backs. How we wearied of those mirages!

Following a halt of some hours, during which we lunched and tried to avoid the scorching heat, we would trek on until late in the night, dragging our wearied feet through the dry dust, seemingly for endless hours, until the agreed-upon halting-place was reached. Then we would sink down in the sand, fight against slumber, in case the camels would miss us in the darkness, and groan in our weariness, until the beasts arrived. Supper would follow, if we were not too tired to eat it, and then to sleep, until about 3 a.m., when another day would be commenced. Some of those dark nights, when we could not see an inch in front of us, and we were weak for want of sleep and good food, were nightmares. We had to call on every ounce of our strength to keep stumbling on, and we prayed for the hour to come round that would indicate that we had covered another full day's stage. My foot had shown little improvement since the day I left Bara, and trudging through hot sand, with the injured member inadequately protected by a flimsy sandal, was a grueling experience. At times I felt almost sick with the pain of it.

It was not a happy journey for any of us, through the Sudan. There were bright spots in the general dreariness of it all, however. At some of the station sidings kindly Arabs would place their quarters at our disposal during our midday halt, bring us beds to lie on, dates to eat, and to drink, and with which to lave our parched and aching bodies. El Meiga, Wadi Ben Naga, El Goz, Um Ali, Zeidab, Kabushia, Eneibis, Shereik, and half a hundred more stopping-places, where such favours were shown us, recall to this day pleasant memories of an otherwise intolerable journey.

If there was one oasis in that desert march more pleasant than any other, it was Shendi. Just before reaching it our "djemella" had announced that the pace was killing their camels. They had even forecasted the hour for the demise of one of the beasts. They reckoned that if they continued at such a pace, one of the camels would drop down in his tracks, and die sharp on the hour of noon on the following day. On the face of that information there was nothing to do to arrange for fresh transport at the next halting-place, which happened to be Shendi, headquarters of the Sudan Cavalry Mounted Rifles, and a Civil post in addition. We reached it, almost knocked up, early in the evening of a particularly sizzling day, and were guided to the officers' mess. In a stride, we were transported from a wilderness of powdered dust to a corner of Arcadia. In the centre of a wide green lawn, set about with leafy trees, four officers were seated sipping sundowners, on a rotunda, under the blaze of a number of arc lamps. They had heard of us in advance, and welcomed us cordially. Our throats were parched, and dust was in our throat and lungs—and before us, on that table, stood a great jug of iced beer! It seemed too good to be true, but they bade us drink, and it was true. Iced beer! There may be beverages more glorious, but the beer I drained that night, has to my own knowledge, never been equalled as a quenching draught either before or since. Jim had to be content with limoon, but I felt glad I was not a teetotaler that night.

After our first salutations were over—and incomparable thirsts had been more or less assuaged—Bimbashi Briscoe—Tyndale, of the Sudan Cavalry Mounted Rifles, led us off to the home of the Assistant District Commissioner, where we arranged to hire camels to take us as far as Atbara. After that we dined at the Mess, and stayed up yarning, until close on midnight, with the genial officers in that little outpost. It was such interludes as our stay at Shendi that rendered the desert march tolerable.

Passing through El Damer, we reached the banks of the Atbara River, loaded our camels into a clumsy rowing-boat manned by about a score of Arabs, and were rowed across to the railway junction town of Atbara—the most important inland town of the Sudan, apart from Khartoum. Its railway workshops support a comparatively large European population, which, with the company of the West Yorkshire Regiment stationed there, makes up a total of 400 souls. It is also the headquarters of the Sudan Government Railways and Steamers, and we made the acquaintance of the Superintendent, Mr. Matthews, who made final arrangements for our being supplied with twenty gallons of water, and an old railway sleeper for fuel, at the stopping-places along the railway across the Nubian Desert. Following a pleasant day spent in the company of Mr. Matthews and his wife, we pushed on once more, and keeping up our average of twenty-five miles a day across the blazing sand, passed through Berber, and on to Abu Hamed. From there we struck off into the Nubian Desert, and for 250 miles saw nothing but the rim of the sky encircling a level expanse of shimmering sand. It was a terrible journey across that desert, and as I was weak and ill with malaria for the whole journey, I experienced an even greater measure of relief than my companions when we sighted the Nile once more at Wadi Halfa.

The little railway terminus town was a garden in our eyes after the utter monotony of the awful wastes we had left behind, and its white bungalows, gleaming through deep groves of clustering palms, spoke to us of ease and rest from the ardours of desert travel. We did not halt there long, however, our only purpose being to change our camels. There was one joyful interlude at the home of the District Traffic Manager for the S.G.R.S., Mr. Frankling, and his wife, and then we combed Wadi Halfa, searching for "djemella" to accompany us along the Wadi Halfa-Shellal reach of the Nile. The route was notoriously rough on camels,

as, for most of the way, rugged jebels ran down right to the water's edge, rendering progress a laborious and difficult affair. It was a route that found little favour with camel-owners, and, try as we would, our efforts to persuade any of the local inhabitants to accompany us with their beasts, proved futile. Fortunately, as we were making our way to the Franklin home for a sun-downer, the night we arrived in, we found the "djemella" who had accompanied us across the Nubian, sleeping in the dust alongside their camels, not far from the house. We had thought them well started on their long journey back to Abu Hamed, with their starved beasts. On the last stages of our journey across that waste the unhappy animals had subsisted for days on baskets, cast away by gangers working on the line, their food supplies having been long since exhausted. We hardly considered that they would be fit for a further journey of 200 miles over very rough country, to Shellal, but when we put the proposition to the "djemella", those stout fellows agreed to make the attempt, without any preliminary arguments.

We slept that night at a little native hotel in the town, and rose at dawn, to start the journey across Egypt. It was the beginning of our last stage. While our camels were being loaded, I wandered down into the labyrinth of narrow, dirty streets, passed dark doorways opening into gloomy interiors, where groups of Arab traders, early astir, were gathered about flaming braziers, for there was a raw nip in the breeze that came up from the river. Thousands of little birds twittered in the great trees, that here and there almost completely blocked up the winding streets. Flocks of pigeons crooned soothingly as they strutted along the flat roofs of the closely-crowding bazaars and dwellings. An ancient mendicant, tattered, wrinkled, and woefully bedraggled, huddled in the angle of a mud wall, sleeping soundly; untidy children were lighting smoky oil lamps in sordid little stores, where the cheapest and poorest of odds and ends of finery were exposed for sale; sable-mantled,

unlovely Arab women drew merciful veils across their faces as I went by, and scuttled into the dingy recesses at the rear of the bazaars, from which they had pattered forth in their bare feet, to observe the passing of the stranger in their town. Pleasant odours of cooking filled the air, and a pleasant warmth was given out from the cook-fires, placed in various odd corners of the dingy little houses. Through the openings between the buildings, afforded by cross lanes leading down to the river, I could see the opposite bank of the Nile, turning golden in the light of breaking day; the streets began to fill, and the spell of being abroad in the dark hours of the morning was broken. I had reached the edge of the town, and could see the dawnlight flooding over the desert in the direction from which we had come. It was my farewell to the Sudan, and although I could perhaps have been better employed in assisting Jim in the task of packing for the trail, I could not resist the temptation of strolling forth to take that final peep at the land in which we had suffered so much, but which, despite all, retained a fascination still.

The camels arrived in good time, we loaded up, and passed out of the town. Threading through palm-shaded villages and flooded cotton fields, over ground that Rameses II had roamed with his armies 3,250 years before, we followed the windings of the river, taking in the picture of graceful "gyasses", rippling the water as their heavy prows were driven forward by the fresh wind that filled their billowing sails.

By midday we were still within the boundaries of the Sudan, and our last camping place in that territory was in the shade of a spreading tree by the white-washed walls of the little mud home of the Omda of the district. The old Omda lavished hospitality on us. He spread a white damask cloth before us, loaded it with fresh and stewed dates, chappaties, roast chickens, and flagons of tea, and pressed us to eat. Eissa Abdou, of Dabeira, was a venerable old chief, the father of 3,000 people, and overlord of three sheikhs. When we encount-

ered him, he was inclined to regard us suspiciously, and demanded to see our passports. He holds, by favour of the Sudanese authorities, a semi-official position, as custodian of that portion of the border, and he takes his duties seriously. We had our passports tied up inside our baggage, and, not wishing to unload, we humoured him by producing some official-looking papers that had the desired effect, and he became very affable after glancing through them, although he could not read a word which they contained. After sharing his meal we dallied a while over coffee and Egyptian cigarettes, then set off after our camels.

We were walking when the sun went down and a bright full moon rose up over the distant ridges, lighting the way for us. Below us on our left the Nile wound through palm-fringed gorges, as softly and silently as a river of oil; the air was warm, and the night was very still. Through the calm loveliness of the desert, we wandered on, over moonlight-flooded sands, in the wake of our silently padding camels, and about 9 o'clock crossed the borderline into the land of Egypt. We were weary then, for we had covered over twenty-five miles since dawn, but the silence of the ancient land into which we were passing, and the glory of the night, seemed to cast a spell over us, and we continued on, each occupied with his own thoughts, for some miles further, until we reached the village of Adendan, and camped down on the sand beyond the mud-walled huts on its outskirts.

CHAPTER XXIII

WHERE RAMESES TROD

THE SHELLAL REACH—ABU SIMBEL—ASSOUAN—A TRIUMPH FOR
METHOD—A DWELLER AMONGST THE ARABS—THE FELLAHEEN—
DARAU—THE WONDERS OF EGYPT—"BUKRA"—"HONEST MEN"—
LUXOR—UMBASHI AND THE ARABS—AMONGST THE ANTIQUES—
UPPER NILE PEASANTS—GHAFFIR—THE LIGHTS OF CAIRO—JOURNEY'S
END

FOR ELEVEN days we followed the windings of the river along that reach, that is justly famed for its beauty. It proved, as we had been warned, a rugged journey, and often the camels had to make wide detours in order to get round the jebels, which in places ran down to the river's edge, and jutted out into the stream. We marched to the tune of countless droning water-wheels—rudely-built, but efficient contrivances which are propelled from early morning until well after dusk, by tireless oxen.

We paused to marvel before the incomparable rock temple of Abu Simbel, cut out of a jebel face, a short distance back from the river's edge. It was constructed by Rameses II, to commemorate his victory over Cheta in North-eastern Syria, and the great walls of the interior of the temple are engraved with tableaux illustrating incidents in that campaign. Four colossal statues, each 65 feet in height, representing the monarch seated before the doorway of the temple, are in an excellent state of preservation, and, though 3,000 years have elapsed since the master-craftsmen of the period carved them out of the living sandstone, the cruel lips, and vain, sneering countenance of the egotistical ruler are still as repulsive as ever they were to gaze upon. By Toski,

where Grenfell Pasha, Sirdar of the Egyptian Army, defeated an army of Sudanese invaders in 1889, we passed, and saw the fortress of Kasr Ibream, which was built on the top of an impregnable jebel overlooking the river in the days of the Middle Empire, as one of a chain between Assouan and Kerma, to protect the caravans that passed, 4,000 years ago, between Egypt and Kush, the modern Sudan. Our route led us by Korosko, Koshtamna and Khorh Rhama, to Shellal, the present terminus of the railway from Cairo.

We lost Umbashi the day before we reached that point in our journey, and we left instructions with the local police to send him on to Assouan, when they located him. The seven-mile tramp to Assouan, by way of the great Nile dam, was made through clouds of fine dust, which blew down from the sand dunes across the river, and we were glad when we reached the gardens on the outskirts of the town. From Assouan, we had but 550 miles to go to our goal, and, as our route would lie along river and railway for the whole distance, we regarded that town as marking the end of the trail through the uncivilised regions of Africa, and the starting point of the straight run home. Thankful we were to have reached it.

Assouan, with its narrow, crowded streets, and its busy, well-stocked bazaars, its fine large hotels, and its glorious promenade along the Nile, struck us as a busy, colourful town by day, but by night, when the antique shops, with their gaily-coloured carpets, silk stuffs, and ivory work, prominently displayed, were all ablaze with lights, and the parade of the well-dressed, befezzed Egyptian leisured classes along the dhow-lined river-front started, it took on a garb that had a fascination all its own for us, who had seen so few signs of life in the past half-year.

We had made our way, directly after we entered the town, to the Mamuria, or Police Headquarters, and sought out the Mamur. The officials had been advised of our coming, and as soon as we introduced ourselves,

officers came thronging about us, offering their services, plying us with questions, and taking down on official forms all manner of what they considered necessary data. Most of them spoke English, and all wished to show it off. Try as we would, we could get nothing done, in the confusion, though everyone was falling over himself in an attempt to get things advanced satisfactorily. The matter of hiring camels for the stage as far as Luxor necessitated endless consultations, and a prodigious amount of running back and forth, before the definite step of sending for a camel-contractor was taken. Then we unwisely mentioned Umbashi, and let slip the fact that he might have gone astray. What a commotion followed! Intelligence officers were summoned, a clerk appeared with "missing friend" forms galore, the Mamur himself plied us with innumerable questions, and all our answers were shouted to a harassed clerk to be translated into Arabic, and set down. As further items concerning the strange one from far Rhodesia were elicited from us, the poor clerk was adjured to include them in his already voluminous report, and telegrams for despatch to police posts as far afield as El Derr, half-way to Halfa, were worded, reworded, destroyed, and started again. We protested that it was all unnecessary, as the boy would probably turn up all right, but all insisted that it was no trouble at all—that it was their duty to discover him immediately. For the next half an hour or so the place was in a ferment. Officers rushed from room to room, half a dozen tried to get our attention at once, and an incessant babble of voices created such a din that it was impossible to convey anything intelligible to anyone. Umbashi restored cosmos by marching in at the height of the commotion with a broad grin on his face, escorted by a small army of triumphant police. Officers beamed delight, and looked at us as if to say "There, that is how our methods work. We have found him, as we said we would," notwithstanding that our strayed wanderer had come in with our camels.

After much trouble we succeeded in hiring two camels to take us as far as Darau, twenty-three miles on. The "djemella" would not come further, and we anticipated that engaging transport for the passage through Egypt was going to prove an annoying business.

We had letters of introduction from the Civil Secretary's Department in Khartoum to deliver to the Governor of the Assouan Province, and our next concern was to interview that gentleman. Before we could speak to him on the telephone an extraordinary number of preliminaries had to be gone through, and an adjournment was made to a stand out in the grounds of the Mamuria, overlooking the Nile Promenade. There we sat for about an hour with the Mamur, the Captain of Police, and several other dignitaries, in the full glare of a bright cluster of electric lights, while a great throng of curious natives of all shades of colour, and all varieties of dress, streamed past, and eyed us wonderingly. Our loaded camels, squatting in the narrow roadway nearby, careless of the traffic surging around them, came in for much speculation, and before long a great concourse of people gathered to gaze, and pass audible comments concerning our probable identity. We sat it out as long as we could, and then, while Jim slipped off to the bazaars to order our supplies for the next stage, I persuaded the Mamur to have another try at getting into communication with the Governor. Finally I was informed that His Excellency was on the telephone, ready to speak. He proved a charming gentleman, wished us well, and politely expressed a desire that we would allow him to show us the antiques in the vicinity of Assouan on the morrow, and to entertain us at lunch with him later. I thanked him, and informed him of the plans we had made to start off again early the next day. I said, however, that I would consult with my companion, and we would try and arrange to delay our departure. He very graciously said that he would be pleased if we could arrange to make the appointment.

Jim and I eventually decided to accept his hospitality, and informed the Mamur accordingly. We wished to notify the gentleman of our acceptance of his invitation that evening, but the Mamur insisted that there would be time enough for that in the morning, and that, for an overwhelming variety of reasons, it would be impossible to again communicate with His Excellency that night. That was our first acquaintance with the Egyptian habit of never doing at once anything that can be put off until the morrow. Egypt is the land of "bukra" (tomorrow). Always when one wishes anything done, be it ever so urgent, one is put off with innumerable objections, and assurances that "bukra" will serve as well. The Mamur conducted us in person to the Governor's sanctum next morning, and His Excellency, after chatting with us an hour, informed us that he regretted deeply not being able to keep the appointment, as not having heard from us again on the previous night, he had made other important engagements. That came of doing things the Egyptian way.

We had put up the previous night at a modest little hotel on the Promenade, and at luncheon that day we met a curious fellow, a European garbed in the loose white skirt and sandals worn by the natives of Upper Egypt. He engaged us in conversation, and told us he was making a journey through the land of the Pharaohs. For a year he had lived with the fellaheen on the Nile bank, near Cairo, eating their food, sleeping in their huts, and associating with no other Europeans. He had even accompanied a camel caravan from Cairo to the Red Sea, and back again, and had endured all the ardours of that journey, and shared the tasks incidental to it. He had come down to Assouan from Luxor in a native dhow, and was bound for the Sudan, Abyssinia, or other country lying in that direction. He had no definite plans.

He was a strange type—a fanatic, to judge by his eyes, and a pacifist, by his speech and manner. Tanned as brown as the natives amongst whom he had cast

his lot, wearing their dress, and speaking their tongue, he yet resembled them in nothing else. He told us he was a Belgian by birth, and a cosmopolitan by upbringing—for the twenty-six years prior to his departure from England for Alexandria, he had been wandering all over Europe. He had struck trouble in England during the War for making pacifist speeches, but chiefly he had kept away from all authority, finding his interests in the homes of the people in all the countries he had visited. He was well-equipped for the life he had adopted, for he spoke nearly every European language, and made a practice of learning any dialect of the people he came amongst. He was a quiet, modest man, easily set awondering by the things we told him. He seemed curiously ignorant of the world at large, despite his wanderings. Facts concerning the attitude of the European to the natives, and of the natives towards the European, which most would have regarded as commonplaces, amazed him exceedingly. He heard our remarks as a child hears of strange happenings in far lands for the first time—in sheer breathless astonishment. He was a queer fellow—a little mad perhaps, and yet, maybe, the sanest man alive. It all depends on how one looks at it.

The camel-contractor we had interviewed at the Mamuria, as we had expected, indulged in the usual sharp practice of supplying a single "djemella" in place of the two we paid for. We had long acknowledged the futility of arguing with such confirmed swindlers, and we headed out of Assouan in high spirits, leaving it to the surly "djemella" to arrange for himself the work of loading and unloading two camels unaided.

We experienced our first cold day since we said good-bye to the highlands of Kenya, the day we moved out of Assouan, and although we endured many hot days in the month that followed, days and nights when an icy wind chilled us to the marrow were not infrequently experienced.

At Darau, a typical Nile village, with its deplorably, dirty, dusty little streets, poor bazaars and ancient mud huts, we halted to change our camels. The inhabitants lounging around dark doorways in their filthy flowing robes of cotton cloth, and unwashed turbans, struck us as an incurably lazy, stupid, intensely inquisitive people, who appeared to have nothing to do but gossip from dawn until dark.

In the larger villages, and in the towns, along the Nile, dwell a class of Egyptian as indolent as the fellaheen are industrious, and Darau is no exception. As we passed between the huts on the way to the police barracks we ran the gauntlet of hundreds of rudely-inquisitive eyes, and impertinent queries as to our reasons for coming that way on foot, our destination, our starting point, how much money we had, etc., etc., were shouted in Arabic by all and sundry. In that village, too, we made the acquaintance for the first time of those pests—the “baksheesh”-begging small boys—to be found in every town and village, from Assouan to Alexandria.

At the Merkaz we met Lieut. Faik Amin Saleh, a Copt. Knowing the ways of his fellow countrymen, Saleh Effendi prophesied that we would probably be delayed a full day in changing over our camels, and so it proved. He sent for the Omda, or leader of the Arab community of the district, and placed his mud house in the village at our disposal while we waited the arrival of that dignitary. Saleh had been deputed to act as one of Princess Mary's escort on the occasion of her visit to Assouan, some time previously, and that perhaps explained his personal interest in two “Inglisi.” He spoke good English and proved a very agreeable companion during the hours that elapsed before the Omdah arrived. It was mid-day when we reached Darau, but it was 5 o'clock before the Omda showed up, although his house was only a few chains away. He proved to be an impressive-looking old Arab, and he informed us proudly that it was his father who

had arranged for a great deal of the camel transport for Kitchener's expedition into the Sudan. According to a written reference in his possession, supplied by a Sudan Agency in Cairo, he was a man who could be relied upon to keep his contracts. He brought with him a camel-contractor, and two evil-looking Arab "djemella." After much palaver, and a great deal of bargaining, the "djemella" announced that they did not want to go as far as Luxor only, but wished to go all the way to Cairo with us. That information was staggering. Our experience hitherto had been that the men complained that the distance we wanted to take them was too great, and would surely kill their camels. To receive a purely voluntary offer of camels for a 525 miles' journey was too good to be true. Suspecting its genuineness, our acceptance of the offer was lukewarm, but we were prepared to test it out, and make a contract whereby we agreed to pay 20 piastres (4s. 1d.) a day for each camel, with its "djemella," and reserved the right to discharge them at our pleasure.

Remaining at Darau as a guest of the Omda for the night, we got away in the darkness before the chilly dawn next day, and passed Komombo before lunch. Komombo to-day is the centre of a large sugar-growing district, and there is an extensive cane-crushing factory, run by Europeans, in the village. There is little to remind one that Komombo is the site of the ancient city of Ombos, from where the desert route to Nubia and Ethiopia commenced. One relic only of the departed glory of the vanished city remains—the famous temple of Ombos. Started by Amenhotep III (1600 B.C.) and continued by Totmes III (1800 B.C.), the temple was completed by the Ptolomies, and the Roman Emperors between 290 B.C. and A.D. 4. Its courtyard and finely decorated columns are still in a wonderful state of preservation.

Continuing on past the sugar-cane plantations of the valley of Wadi Komombo, once an arid region, but transformed into an extremely fertile area by the

efforts of Sir Ernest Cassel and Messrs. Sauares, who carried out an extensive and costly land-irrigation scheme in the district, we paused at the base of Gebel Silsila to drink tea with the station-master of the tiny railway siding on the site. It was from Gebel Silsila that the sandstone material for the famous temple of Luxor was quarried; and was transported from there down the Nile by barge.

Time for us was an urgent consideration, and the delays with which we were faced at every turn troubled us considerably. When, a few miles beyond Gebel Silsila, we reached Kagug, and made our mid-day halt, the "djemella" came to us and announced that they did not intend proceeding farther that day. We had thought when they agreed to accompany us to Cairo that we would be free of irritating delays for a few days at least. Now, after but half a day's trekking, we were informed that twenty-five miles a day was far too much for any camels to travel. Our "djemella" said, in reply to our statement that there still remained ten kilometres to be covered to complete the day's trek, that it would be all right—they would do the extra distance on the morrow. We insisted that they did it that day. They refused pointblank to go another step. When we repeated our order they gave vent to a tirade of abuse, and threatened to oppose any efforts we made to load the camels by physical force. Had we persisted trouble would have ensued, for they were uncouth people, with not the slightest respect for authority. Even if we carried our point that day, we knew that trouble would be a daily occurrence while they remained with us, so we decided to pay them off. Learning that there were camels procurable at Kagug, owned by "honest men", we requested the station-master to send for the local sheikh, and from him we hired two camels. We insisted that the "djemella" to attend them be men renowned, not so much for their honesty, as for their endurance. We were successful in engaging two old Arabs, one with a most

fearful squint, and both looking anything but the honest men they were reputed to be. We had to pay them at an increased rate, but they, on the other hand, guaranteed to get us to Luxor, a little over eighty miles, in three and a half days. When all was arranged, they left us to go to their huts, assuring us that they would be with us again before dawn on the morrow, bringing plenty of rope, and having all ready for an early departure.

They did not arrive before dawn, nor did they have sufficient rope when they did arrive, an hour after sunrise. They were not a whit abashed, however. They shook us by the hands very agreeably, placed their hands on their hearts, and swore to serve us well—all of which made us very suspicious. We had met that kind before.

After struggling unsuccessfully for half an hour to get a couple of hundred cubic feet of baggage into a few rope nets with the capacity of about half that volume, the "honest men", aided by about a dozen garrulous assistants, unloaded everything again, and one fellow dived off for more rope. On his return the camels were hung about with boxes and bundles in a manner that would have shamed any "djemella" with the slightest pride in his work. We ventured to protest that the job they made of the loading would never do. We were assured that it was "kwys ghalas" (very good indeed). Our two worthies declared that they were master-hands at camel loading, and had made no less than seventeen camel journeys to the mysterious and far away lands of the Sudan. They took us for tourists, come down from Cairo, and indulging in a journey with camels, for the romance of the thing. We did not try to disabuse their minds, but kept silent, and waited. The camels were urged to rise, the honest men stepped back with an I-told-you-so look on their faces—and then the loads fell off. They were not in the least perturbed. They said it would be all right. They would start all over again. They did, while we

stood shivering in half-frozen boots, hands dug into the deepest recesses of all-too-inadequate pockets, venturing a little lurid criticism, that was quite wasted.

We moved away at last with the loads sagging and bulging lop-sidedly on the backs of the two Shipwrecks of the Desert, that the beauties had brought with them, and offered for our inspection as the finest camels in all Egypt. When the "djemella" found that the loads were going to stay on, they exulted openly, and tried to shake hands with us again. They were not humbled in the slightest when we refused, but continued to regard us as affably as ever.

They proved to be honest men, after all, and managed to arrive at Luxor in the scheduled three-and-a-half days, although one did threaten to cut my throat, and drew his knife for the purpose when I ventured to suggest one evening that the camels should continue on for a few more miles before halting. We established ourselves in the native quarter of the town, in the vicinity of the railway station, and then sallied forth to the Merkaz to negotiate with the Mamur for fresh camels. Those negotiations lasted half a day, and at the end of it we had received but one offer. A gorgeously-robed dragoman, after treating us to a flowery discourse on the romance of desert travel in the wake of the tireless Ships of the Desert, generously volunteered to bring a string of finely caparisoned beasts to the Merkaz on the morrow, and hand them over to us, in consideration for the modest fee of about £5 a day. We gently, but firmly, refused, and, our patience with camel-dealers thoroughly exhausted, we had our baggage dumped down on the railway platform, and, when a train came in, sent Umbashi on with it, to a station ten miles down the line.

We had decided that henceforth we would use the Egyptian State Railways in place of camels. Our plan was to send our belongings on in charge of Umbashi a distance of twenty-five miles each day, impressing

on our servant the number of sidings he must pass before alighting. We would follow on foot to the appointed halting-place, and expect Umbashi to have all in readiness for us to dine, and camp when we arrived. The plan worked well, and so we covered the remainder of our journey. Sometimes, it is true, Umbashi lost count, and got carried on too far, but we always succeeded in picking him up eventually, though it meant that on such occasions we had to retire to rest on the bare boards of some railway waiting-room, and endure a twenty-four hours' fast. Once when Umbashi went astray, the Egyptian police found him, and as Umbashi, knowing no Arabic, was unable to explain to their satisfaction how he came to be possessed of a quantity of a European's luggage, he was arrested and placed in "jug", as he called it. We located him at length, with the aid of the telephone, and he was bundled on to a train and returned to us. He arrived in a highly excited state, seething with indignation, and loud in his denunciation of the crass stupidity of "Arabi m'polisa". Another night, we had, ourselves, to sleep on the hard, wooden trestles that serve as beds in the Egyptian Police barracks, because our henchman had gone astray, but for the most part the arrangement worked out well, and we generally had our stretchers set up in some railway waiting-room, and our supper prepared for us at the end of our day's march.

Almost invariably we had to walk until late into the night in order to complete our stages, as a great part of each day was spent in visiting the antiquities of the ancient land through which we were passing.

Passing back across the river flats beyond the famous Colossus of Memnon, we reached the river at dusk, recrossed, and landed on the eastern bank. The Nile was shining brightly in the refulgence of the myriad lights of the Winter Palace Hotel, and a full moon sailed high over the river palms. It was a glorious hour, and although we were tired and hungry, and still had a ten-mile walk before us that night, we could

not resist the temptation of a stroll through the dark shadows and moonlit courtyard of the Temple of Luxor, hard by the hotel. The experience was a never-to-be forgotten one. Wherever we walked—through the Great Forecourt, the Hypostyle Hall, the First and Second Vestibules, and the Sanctuaries—we felt dwarfed and humbled by the mighty fluted columns towering above us. Everything in that mighty temple was builded on a huge plan, and its Gargantuan statuary is mightily impressive. For all its vastness, the temple is still a thing of beauty, and despite its ruined state, its graceful columns, imposing pillars and artistic reliefs give a vivid idea of how magnificent an edifice the temple must have been thousands of years ago. It was very late before we could persuade ourselves to leave that spot, and set off on our ten-miles' tramp to join our waiting bond-slave round the camp fire.

The whole of our progress through the land of the Pharaohs was an enthrallingly interesting experience, and to describe it in detail, even were it advisable, would be impossible, in the concluding pages of this volume. We found time to explore all the antiquities of that fascinating land. The 550-miles walked through Egypt, was perhaps the most engrossing stage of the whole journey. We had an opportunity of studying every phase of Egyptian life, and seeing the country in its entirety, for Egypt is literally the Nile. All its population is concentrated along the river, and, in Lower Egypt, on the Delta. From Luxor, all the way to Cairo, canals run parallel to the river, at a distance of from a quarter of a mile to two miles from it. Day after day, we tramped along the banks of the main canal, passing through a continuous line of villages, with the fertile cultivations ever on either hand, and we were able to observe the fellaheen at work, and at home. Many of the ignorant folk regarded us truculently as we passed, called insults after us, and on a few occasions bands of loutish fellows left their fields,

and congregating across the track along the canal bank, barred our passage. We would push through them without speaking, and they would laugh jeeringly at us, calling us profane names. When such tactics failed to provoke us to direct action, they would pick up clods of mud, and a few chunks would come flying past our heads. Once, when I was marching some distance ahead of Jim, a band of roughs spoke so insultingly that I turned on their leader, and heaved him over the canal bank. He fetched up in the soft earth, and jumping up in a rare rage, found a mattock near to his hand. He snatched it up, and scrambling back to the track, flew at me, with the weapon raised above his head. Our arms were with our baggage, and I had only a large hunting-knife with which to defend myself. I drew it quickly, and whipped the point up under his throat. He dropped the mattock, and laughed. A large crowd had gathered, many of them armed with stout sticks, and I deemed it wiser to take no further action. I turned, and had gone about twenty yards when a fusillade of mud and sticks thudded round me. Not wishing to provoke a riot, I ignored the fellows, and they eventually dispersed. When Wilson came along however, they also showered him with mud and abuse. Since English officials have been withdrawn from Upper Egypt, the fellaheen have lost all respect for British subjects.

At Sohag we dined with the Governor of the Province, and found him a delightful personality. He spoke very well of the peasantry over whom he governed. He admitted that brute passions were easily aroused in them, and that, if incited by scheming firebrands, they were liable to get out of hand, and give rein to all the worst instincts of the mob. Left alone however, they were industrious, orderly serfs. Politically they were represented by the Wafd Party, but, being extremely ignorant, they understood next to nothing of politics, and adhered blindly to the party that had assumed leadership over them. The Governor himself, by the

way, was not of the Wafd Party, and as the 1929 elections, which were to be contested on December 21, about a fortnight from that date, would certainly result in an overwhelming victory for the Wafd, he anticipated being removed from office. His prophecy proved correct, for on coming into power, the Wafd turned out, not only him, but several other Provincial Governors.

Our schedule provided for our arrival in Cairo on election day, and we more than half expected that rioting would break out while we were still outside the area included in the Cairo Governorate, and therefore isolated from a protection of the British forces, should that protection become necessary. The Egyptian authorities in the various provinces we passed through apparently considered there was some danger in our proceeding alone through the towns and villages, and escorts were frequently pressed upon us. We had no desire to proceed with police and soldiers ever at our side, and we did our best to dispense with the proffered services. Despite all our attempts to evade escorts, however, there was one body that proved too persistent for us. They were the men of the Ghaffir force, or village nightwatchmen, who, many years ago had been organised into a semi-military body, under the control of their Omdas and Sheikhs.

Illiterate, uncouth peasants, who had left their cultivations to go through a course of musketry and drill, the Ghaffir constitute a menace to safety, rather than a protection. Each is armed with a rifle, and has a plentiful supply of ammunition in a bandolier slung across his shoulder. They do not wear uniform, and it was a matter of difficulty for us to distinguish them from armed ruffians. At nights, as we stumbled along the railway line, or skirted the canals, we went in momentary fear of having a bullet sent through our backs, for we were constantly being challenged from the darkness, and as we had no intention of halting at the command of every inquisitive fellah who wished

to question us, we were ever uncertain as to whether a rifle shot would follow the shouted "Istanna! Talla! hina!" ("Stop! Come here!"). As we drew nearer Cairo we found it impossible to avoid the pests, for they started up in front of us very few miles or so, and would insist on escorting us a couple of miles, to hand us over to another party. Along the railway line they were particularly numerous, and we stumbled on groups of two or three of them squatting near the rails, about every three-quarters of a mile. Thousands of them must have been employed in guarding the line, in anticipation of election-time disorders, and they regarded us very suspiciously. They were a disreputable-looking, unheroic crew. They looked more villainous, we thought, than the majority of their evil-looking fellow-villagers, whose lives and belongings they watched over by night. We generally startled the wits out of them when we came upon them suddenly out of the darkness, and we felt it was quite on the cards that, sooner or later, they would shoot first, and challenge later.

From Assiut onwards, larger towns became more and more frequent, and the bustle and activity of Minia, Beni Suef and Wasta had the effect of exciting us strangely. Flying automobiles that passed us, bound for Cairo, splashing us with mud as they went, brought it home to us that after fifteen trying months we were at last almost on the threshold of the city of our dreams. Though we still had long day and night marches to do, often through the mud and rain, for then it was the Egyptian winter, we could speak of nothing but Cairo, and the promise of the long-denied delights of civilisation. Cairo, and the end of the road! We could hardly believe that we were almost there. Our excitement communicated itself to Umbashi, and that faithful heathen kept continually asking us how much longer it would be before we arrived. When, after Wasta, we told him two and a half days, he laughed and refused to believe us. He suggested two and a half

weeks, but when we assured him we were not joking, he grinned happily, and said with the money we gave him he would buy two wives, and a motor car at Cairo, and drive back to his village in the Rhodesian swamps, and win the acclaim of his tribe.

The cold weather experienced from Sohag onwards had brought on my malaria again, and the long night marches we were making in our impatience to cover the last miles of our journey, were exceptionally trying to both of us. We were frequently wet through by rain, and our camping-places were invariably the cold, draughty little railway waiting-rooms, where it was impossible to obtain comfort, and where there was no privacy from the prying eyes of the inquisitive "nas", who gathered in hordes around our temporary abodes to stare at us, and ply the harassed Umbashi with innumerable questions. Then, one night we saw the lights of Heluan gleaming through the murk across the river, and all our troubles were forgotten. Cairo was very near.

Plodding along the canal bank the next day, we saw, beyond the green of the cultivations, the graceful minarets of the Mohammad Ali mosque, towering above the Citadel, at the end of the distant, red-brown Mokattam Hills, and at sunset the mighty piles of the Pyramids showed up against the darkening sky. We did not exult openly; our hearts were too full for that. We walked in silence to Giza, made camp as usual, and strangely enough, found little to talk about before turning in on that, the last of all those nights we had spent on the open road.

As Cairo was stirring to life next morning, we dressed for the last time in knee-boots, shorts and topees, and, in company, headed for the thousand beckoning minarets of the City.

As on the days we each took our separate decisions to venture forth on the Cape to Cairo road, our minds were in tumult—this time, with the tumult of joy. Doubts and fears were done with, and the thrill of

triumph was ours. After fifteen and a half months of foot-slogging over Africa, after 7,620 miles of continuous tramping, we had reached the end of the road at last. Our hearts sang as we set foot on the Kasr-el-Nil Bridge, and mingled with the traffic of Cairo.

THE END

